

of meditation will only cause us to waste our life without bringing anything of real value.

On the other hand, if our meditation is supported by enlightenment mind, renunciation, correct view, and the act of taking refuge, it will be, in the same order, a Mahayana practice, a practice that leads to liberation, and a genuine form of Buddhist practice. Therefore, these are the kinds of unerring paths that we must pursue. Emptying the mind of all objective content and focusing on its luminous nature, without the support of any of the attitudes just mentioned, will do nothing to counteract the belief in the self-existence of entities. Such a practice offers nothing but the risk of bringing the same unhappy result that the non-Buddhist teacher Udraka experienced [362a].

(Kyabje Rinpoche concluded by saying that we must avoid the mistake of believing an inferior path to be superior, and we must learn how to distinguish between a genuine path and a false one.)

## **ii) How to train oneself in insight, which is the essence of wisdom**

This part of the outline is made up of three sections: (1) establishing the insubstantiality of the self, (2) establishing the insubstantiality of entities, and (3) the method of developing insight.

### **(1) Establishing the insubstantiality of the self**

The first section consists of two subsections: (1) how to cultivate the space-like realization during a state of mental composure, and (2) how to cultivate the realization that all conventional entities are like illusions during the period following meditation.

#### **(a) How to cultivate the space-like realization during a state of mental composure**

This topic is made up of four key points: (1) determining the object to be negated; (2) determining that, in order for the self to be truly existent, it must either be identical with the heaps or distinct from them; (3) determining that a truly existent self cannot be identical with the heaps; and (4) determining that a truly existent self cannot be distinct from the heaps.

Once we achieve a firm state of quiescence, we should not pursue the type of insight practice that merely suppresses the active form of the mental afflictions. In this worldly path,<sup>12</sup> each level of meditative composure is

<sup>12</sup>S: *lokamārgaḥ*, T: *'jig rten pa'i lam*. This type of insight practice is practiced by Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike. It is a method that gradually overcomes desire for the various levels of samsara, ranging from the desire realm up to, but not including, the fourth level of the

achieved by regarding a higher level as more tranquil and the level below it as coarse.

Because our main goal is to achieve liberation, the insight practice we should pursue is the supramundane path that cuts samsara's root by investigating the insubstantiality of both the self and entities. As the following verse from *In Praise of the Praiseworthy* declares, generating this type of insight gradually overcomes all of samsara's defects, even without developing the eight states of meditative composure associated with the two higher realms.<sup>13</sup>

Yet those who follow your teaching  
Can overcome samsaric existence  
Without attaining the main absorptions,  
Even as the Evil One looks on.<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, in order to attain liberation we must establish the meaning of that most profound of subjects, emptiness [362b]. Otherwise, there is no way we can possibly achieve this goal. Moreover, without realizing emptiness, all our other Bodhisattva activities will be contaminated by the mistaken belief that entities are self-existent. Just as a bird with only one wing cannot fly, we cannot travel to the realm of Buddhahood with only one of the two essential elements of means and wisdom. Therefore, we must train ourselves in both the means of enlightenment mind and the wisdom that realizes emptiness. As Je Lama himself declared:

Even after developing renunciation and enlightenment  
mind,  
You will not be able to cut the root of samsaric existence  
Without gaining the wisdom that realizes ultimate reality.  
So devote yourself to the method for realizing dependent  
origination.<sup>15</sup>

formless realm. However, this practice only overcomes desire temporarily; it cannot eradicate the seeds of the mental afflictions.

<sup>13</sup>There are eight states of meditative composure—the four absorptions (S: *dhyānam*, T: *bsam gyan*) of the form realm and the four states of composure (S: *samāpattiḥ*, T: *sn'yoms 'jug*) associated with the formless realm. Each of these eight states has a preliminary stage and a main stage. The first absorption of the form realm also has a third level called the superior stage. These levels of meditative composure form an ancillary topic of the *Ornament of Realizations* (S: *Abhisamayālmkārah*), one of the five major Sūtrayāna treatises that are studied in Gelukpa monasteries.

<sup>14</sup>S: *Varṇārhavarṇastotram*, ch. 9, v. 23.

<sup>15</sup>*Three Principal Elements of the Path* (T: *Lam gyi gtzo bo rnam gsum*), v. 9.

Even the doubt that leans toward believing in emptiness<sup>16</sup> tears apart the erroneous belief that entities are self-existent, as if it were shredding a piece of cloth. It is also described as destroying the belief that entities are self-existent in the same way that hail destroys crops. As the *Four Hundred Verses* declares:

A person of little virtue doesn't even  
Develop uncertainty about this subject.  
Yet merely developing this uncertainty  
Tears samsaric existence to shreds.<sup>17</sup>

However, to realize emptiness we must cultivate its requisites. This collection of essential conditions for gaining a realization of correct view includes: relying on a holy teacher who knows perfectly all the essential points of the Buddha's teachings; receiving from such a teacher the instructions that explain emptiness; carrying out practices that accumulate merit and remove mental obscurations; and making supplication to your guru, whom you regard as inseparable in nature from your tutelary deity. If we lack any of these requisites, we will not be able to develop a realization of the correct view [363a].

While Indian Buddhist scholars from the four major philosophical schools<sup>18</sup> held many divergent points concerning the nature of the correct view, the most important theory is that of the Prasangika branch of the Madhyamaka School. They explain emptiness to mean dependent origination, and dependent origination as being equivalent to emptiness.

To accommodate the different levels of understanding of his followers, our compassionate Master first taught that the self is not a distinct substance

<sup>16</sup>T: *don 'gyur gyi the tsom*. Tibetan epistemology describes three types of doubt: (1) doubt that tends toward erroneous belief about its object, (2) doubt that tends toward right belief about its object, and (3) doubt that is completely undecided about the nature of its object.

<sup>17</sup>T: *bZhi brgya pa*, ch. 8, v. 5.

<sup>18</sup>Tibetan scholars recognize four main Indian Buddhist philosophical schools: Vaibhashika, Sautrantika, Yogachara, and Madhyamaka. The first two are part of the Hinayana tradition. The Vaibhashika views, which developed from the early Abhidharma literature, are well represented in the root verses of Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Higher Learning* (S: *Abhidharma-kośakārikā*). The Sautrantika School developed largely in reaction to what were considered naive and mistaken beliefs of the Vaibhashikas. The two remaining schools, Yogachara and Madhyamaka, belong to the Mahayana tradition. Of the two, the Yogachara or Mind Only School, which accepts the existence of real mental entities, developed after the Madhyamakas. The Madhyamaka or Middle Way School rejects the existence of any inherently real entities, mental or physical, and was established around the 1st century by the great sage Nagarjuna. The Prasangika branch of the Madhyamaka School is mainly associated with the scholars Buddhapalita and Chandrakirti. Later figures such as Shantideva and Atisha are also regarded as Prasangikas.

that exists on its own,<sup>19</sup> in order to overcome attachment to the belief in a real self. To those disciples who were somewhat more developed, he taught that some entities are truly existent while others are not.<sup>20</sup> To others who were even more developed than this, he taught that although no entities are truly existent, they do exist inherently.<sup>21</sup> Finally, he taught his highest followers that all entities lack any inherent existence.<sup>22</sup> Of these doctrines, the last one represents the Blessed One's highest teaching and his ultimate view.

Moreover, we must try to learn this correct view by studying the works of the venerable Lord Nagarjuna, who was prophesied by our Master himself. Lord Buddha declared that he would be unsurpassed for his ability to explain the Conqueror's underlying thought—a doctrine free of the two extremes of eternalism and nihilism:

A glorious and renowned monk shall appear  
In the southern land of Vedali.  
Known by the name Naga, he will destroy  
The views on being and nonbeing.<sup>23</sup>

There are many individuals who expound what are purported to be new theories. While these ideas are believed by some to be very profound, they should be regarded as correct explanations of the Buddha's ultimate view only to the extent that they are in agreement with Nagarjuna's system [363b]. Any opinions that differ from his are certain to be at variance with the Conqueror's underlying thought. Leaving aside those Tibetans of lesser intellect, even such great Indian pandits as Bhavaviveka and such learned Tibetan scholars as Jonangba were wrong about this key topic of the correct view.

<sup>19</sup>T: *gang zag rang rkya tub pa'i rdzas yod kyis stong pa*. This view, which holds that there is no real self apart from the five heaps, identifies the conventional self with either mind consciousness or the collection of the five heaps as a whole. It is referred to as the rough explanation of the insubstantiality of the self (T: *gang zag gi bdag med rags pa*) and is generally adhered to by all Buddhist schools except the Prasangikas. Here it is being associated specifically with the two Hinayana schools, the Vaibhashikas and the Sautrantikas.

<sup>20</sup>This is a reference to the Yogachara School, which holds that while form (S: *rūpaḥ*, T: *gzugs*) is not truly existent (i.e., real), mind is.

<sup>21</sup>This is a reference to the second branch of the Madhyamaka School, the Svatantrikas. This school holds that although no causally efficient entities are truly existent (i.e., nothing is real from the perspective of ultimate truth), they do exist inherently (T: *rang bzhin gyis grub pa*) in that they have distinct essences from the perspective of conventional truth.

<sup>22</sup>T: *chos thams cad rang bzhin gyis med pa*. This is a reference to the Madhyamaka Prasangika School.

<sup>23</sup>*Sutra on the Descent into Lanka* (S: *Lankāvatārasūtram*), ch. 10, v. 165.

Some who have tried to follow Nagarjuna's system did not understand it properly. Others not only didn't follow Nagarjuna, they even tried to refute him. But this is what Chandrakirti wrote about those who do not rely on the system established by Nagarjuna and his spiritual sons, and who devise theories that fall outside this great teacher's doctrine:

There is no means of attaining Peace  
For those outside Acharya Nagarjunapada's path;  
They have strayed from conventional and ultimate truth.  
Anyone who strays from them cannot attain liberation.<sup>24</sup>

If there were a second doorway leading to Peace, we could enter that. But since there isn't, our only recourse is to follow Nagarjuna's system. And the great Atisha declared that Acharya Chandrakirti is the supreme among Nagarjuna's followers:

How can emptiness be realized?  
Nagarjuna, who was prophesied by the Tathagata  
And who perceived the truth of ultimate reality,  
Had a disciple named Chandrakirti.

The truth of ultimate reality can be realized  
Through instruction handed down by him.<sup>25</sup>

Many of the scholars and spiritual adepts from the various traditions that arose during the early period of Buddhism<sup>26</sup> in Tibet were followers of Chandrakirti [364a]. Indeed, many of the teachers who founded these Tibetan traditions held views that were in agreement with his Prasangika system. But these scholars developed a variety of teaching methods to fit the levels of their disciples, and over time many of these followers did not correctly understand the true philosophical views of their spiritual forebears. As a result, mistaken ideas gradually found their way into these systems.

Jamgön Tsongkapa also had a difficult time trying to find a teacher from whom he could learn the ultimate Buddhist philosophical view. As he felt there was no one in Tibet whom he could trust concerning the correct view,

<sup>24</sup> *Introduction to the Middle Way* (T: *dBu ma la 'jug pa*), ch. 6, v. 79.

<sup>25</sup> *Introduction to the Two Truths* (T: *bDen pa gnyis la 'jug pa*), vol. 30 (a) in *dBu ma* section of Tg., f. 72a.

<sup>26</sup> This period roughly spans the early seventh to the mid-ninth centuries. See also Part One, Day Two, p. 43 and accompanying note 45.

he was planning to go to the Land of Aryas<sup>27</sup> with the hope of meeting teachers such as Acharya Nagabodhi and the great spiritual adept Maitripada. But the Great Adept from Hlodrak strongly urged him to put off this trip.<sup>28</sup> With the Great Adept acting as intermediary, Je Tsongkapa was able to address various questions about the correct philosophical view to Vajrapani. A record of what this deity said is contained in the work entitled the *Garland of Supremely Healing Nectar: A Series of Divine Responses*.<sup>29</sup>

Even this deity's instructions—at least in the version that appears in contemporary editions—still form the basis of philosophical debate. Je Tsongkapa himself was not completely satisfied with this teaching, so he prayed to his guru whom he viewed as inseparable in nature from Mañjushri. He practiced intensely and over a long period to accumulate merit and purify himself of obstacles. He also meditated with great determination on the various topics of practice. Through the combination of these efforts, he eventually achieved a direct vision of Mañjushri.

In general, there are three ways a vision of a deity can occur. One way of perceiving a deity's presence is when psychic winds enter various channels of the practitioner's body. A second way is when the deity is experienced in a practitioner's mind consciousness during meditation. The third is when a practitioner directly perceives a deity with his sense consciousness, just as one human being perceives another [364b].

Because Je Rinpoche's visions of Mañjushri were of the last type, he was able to communicate with the deity just as disciples can with an ordinary human teacher. At one point, Je Rinpoche asked questions about various difficult points relating to the correct view. When he gave the appearance<sup>30</sup> of not understanding the profound answers that he received, the Exalted One said to him, "Go to Rendawa<sup>31</sup> to try and resolve your uncertainty." When this failed to clear up Je Rinpoche's difficulties, Mañjushri declared, "Use

<sup>27</sup>S: *Āryavartah*, T: *'Phags pa'i yul*. An epithet of India.

<sup>28</sup>T: *iHo brag grub chen*, 1326–1401. His ordination name was Namka Gyeltsen (T: *Nam mkha' rgyal mtsan*). Je Tsongkapa received instructions for two of the three Kadampa Lamrim lineages from this teacher (see Part One, Appendix B, pp. 238 and 239).

<sup>29</sup>The teacher Namka Gyeltsen had visions of Vajrapani and was able to communicate with him directly. At this point in his spiritual career, Je Tsongkapa did not yet have this ability. This famous dialogue took place in 1396. The text of Vajrapani's instruction, entitled *Zhu lan sman mchog bdud rtzi'i 'phreng ba*, is listed in the Bibliography under (*rJe*) *Tsong kha pa*.

<sup>30</sup>T: *tsul bstan pa*. See Part One, Day One, p. 7 and accompanying note 8 for an explanation of the phrase to "give the appearance" of doing something. See also Day Twenty-one, p. 250.

<sup>31</sup>Rendawa Shōnu Lodrō (T: *Re mda' ba gZhon nu blo gros*, T: 1349–1412). A teacher from the Sakya tradition from whom Je Tsongkapa received extensive instructions in such treatises as Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Higher Learning* (S: *Abhidharmakośakārikā*) and Chandrakirti's *Elucidation of the Words* (S: *Prasannapadā*). Later, Venerable Rendawa also received instruction from Lama Tsongkapa. See also Day Fifteen, note 55.

what I have taught you as the basis of your understanding. If you exert yourself diligently, in the future you will gain an unerring realization of the profound view by relying on the scriptures of Indian pandits."

As foretold in this prophecy, following great efforts to accumulate merit, purify himself of obscurations, and the like, Je Rinpoche experienced a vision of Acharya Buddhapalita. Soon after that, he attained a genuine realization of the Madhyamaka Prasangika School's ultimate view of emptiness when he once again studied this teacher's commentary to the *Root Verses on the Middle Way*.<sup>32</sup>

Je Rinpoche did not give much importance to these visions he had experienced of many Indian pandits and spiritual adepts. Nevertheless, through the disciple called the Realized One,<sup>33</sup> Mañjushri conveyed the following message to Je Tsongkapa: "Do not ignore these visions. You will greatly benefit both yourself and others through the writings of these Indian Buddhist teachers."

After Je Tsongkapa gained his unerring realization of the Madhyamaka or Middle Way view, he developed such great faith toward our Master that he was moved to compose the *Shorter Essence of Eloquent Sayings*,<sup>34</sup> which praises Buddha for having taught dependent origination. Some time later, Bodong Chok-le Namgyel<sup>35</sup> overheard a beggar pilgrim reciting this poem out loud. At first, the great scholar thought it was one of Nagarjuna's works [365a]. Then, after listening further, he thought it might have been composed by Chandrakirti. But when the poem revealed toward the end that the author had relied on the writings of both Nagarjuna and Chandrakirti, he realized that it could not have been composed by either of them. So Bodong asked the beggar who had written this work and was told that its author was the great Je Tsongkapa.

Upon hearing this, Bodong felt an unshakably strong faith toward Je Lama and traveled to central Tibet hoping to meet him. But by this time Je Lama had gone to the pure realms in order to further the welfare of all sentient

<sup>32</sup>See also Part One, Day Five, p. 168 for another reference to this event.

<sup>33</sup>T: *rTogs ldan pa*. Jampel Gyatso (T: *'Jam dpal rgya mtso*, 1356–1428) was one of eight close disciples who accompanied Je Tsongkapa when he went into retreat. He also had the ability to communicate with Mañjushri. See *Lives of the Lamrim Teachers* (T: *Lam rim bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar*), vol. 1, pp. 849–865.

<sup>34</sup>T: *Legs bshad snying po chung ba*. The more common and informal title of this work is *In Praise of Dependent Origination* (T: *rTen 'brel bstod pa*). The full title in the colophon reads: *The Essence of Eloquent Sayings: A Praise of Lord Buddha, the Unsurpassed Teacher for the Entire World and a Great Friend even to Those with Whom He is Unacquainted, for Having Taught the Profound Doctrine of Dependent Origination*.

<sup>35</sup>T: *Bo dong phyogs las rnam rgyal*, 1375–1451. A great scholar and accomplished poet who was Tibet's most prolific writer, his collected works encompass more than a hundred volumes.

beings, so Bodong was unable to meet him. When he learned of Je Tsongkapa's passing, Bodong threw the gold and silver coins that he had intended to present as an offering into the sky and prayed that he might be able to meet Je Lama in the future. It is said that these coins miraculously landed at Ganden Monastery.

You should recognize that the eloquent writings of this great spiritual being Je Tsongkapa are unsurpassed for their ability to explain the Buddha's profound teaching on emptiness. Je Lama did not accept as authoritative the majority of those Indian treatises that purported to explain the correct philosophical view. However, in response to Je Lama's inquiries, Mañjushri declared that Chandrakirti was a high Bodhisattva of great wisdom and courage who knowingly came to this world from a Buddha's paradise in order to spread Lord Nagarjuna's teaching on the profound view. The deity further remarked that this scholar's writings are totally free of error. In keeping with this instruction, Je Tsongkapa regarded the writings of Chandrakirti [365b] along with the word of his guru, Mañjushri, as valid and authoritative.

When we study and contemplate Je Tsongkapa's writings on the correct philosophical view, we find that they are very difficult to comprehend and fathom. The reason we cannot understand these writings easily is that their subject is exceedingly weighty and deep. Nevertheless, if we read them carefully again and again, we will discover many explanations that both clarify important issues and express profound ideas in a unique and extraordinary way. Because of this, Je Tsongkapa's writings are particularly effective in giving us the understanding of emptiness that will gradually bring the different levels of wisdom, starting with the wisdom that derives from listening.<sup>36</sup>

Now I shall briefly explain the topic of insight based on the philosophical view that Je Tsongkapa taught, beginning with the topic called "Establishing the insubstantiality of the self." This is in keeping with the instruction on the proper order of practice described in the following lines from the *Four Hundred Verses*:

<sup>36</sup>S: *śrutamayīprajñā*, T: *thos byung gi shes rab*. This is the first of three levels of wisdom; the other two are wisdom that derives from contemplation (S: *cintamayīprajñā*, T: *bsam byung gi shes rab*) and wisdom that derives from meditation (S: *bhāvanāmayīprajñā*, T: *bsgom byung gi shes rab*). Listening wisdom is not knowledge (S: *pramāṇam*, T: *tsad ma*) in the epistemological sense; it is only correct belief. The second type of wisdom, that which derives from contemplation, is knowledge—more specifically, inferential knowledge (S: *anumānam*, T: *rjes su dpag pa*). The third type, meditation wisdom, is gained when the practitioner begins to cultivate quiescence and insight jointly, using emptiness as the object of meditation. This wisdom culminates in a form of direct yogic perception—in this case, the direct realization of emptiness.



First overcome what is nonvirtuous;  
 Then overcome belief in a self;  
 Finally overcome all belief in entities.  
 Wise is the person who understands this.<sup>37</sup>

We should begin by overcoming such mistaken views as the belief that karma and its results do not exist. These topics were presented in the teachings for persons of lesser and moderate capacities. Next we should overcome the belief that the self is truly existent. Finally, we should overcome the belief that all other entities are truly existent. While the self-existent nature or essence that is being denied in these two forms of insubstantiality is the same, the one that is denied in relation to the self is somewhat easier to comprehend. This is why the insubstantiality of the self is taught first.

Now there are many proofs that establish the existence of emptiness, including dependent origination and the seven-part reasoning [366a]. However, the one that is easiest for beginning practitioners to grasp is called the "lack of identity or distinctness."<sup>38</sup> Therefore, Je Rinpoche and many of his followers have explained this proof on the basis of four key points: (1) determining the object to be negated, (2) determining that a truly existent self must either be identical with the heaps or separate from them, (3) determining that a truly existent self cannot be identical with the heaps, and (4) determining that a truly existent self cannot be distinct from the heaps.

#### (1) The key point of determining the object to be refuted

Several lines from *Engaging in Bodhisattva Activities* declare:

Without grasping the fabricated mode of being,  
 Its nonexistence cannot be realized.<sup>39</sup>

Unless we can recognize the nature of the false mode of existence that is being denied, we will not be able to realize the simple negation<sup>40</sup> that is

<sup>37</sup>T: *bZhi brgya pa*, ch. 8, v. 15.

<sup>38</sup>S: *ekānekavirahitayuktih*, T: *gcig du bral gyi rigs pa*.

<sup>39</sup>S: *Bodhicaryāvatārah*, ch. 9, v. 140.

<sup>40</sup>The distinction between "affirmative objects" and "negative objects" is crucial to the central thesis of Madhyamaka philosophy. Specifically, the emptiness that is posited of all entities is explained as constituting a simple negation. This negation is realized through logically refuting the possibility of self-existent entities. In the present context, the object to be refuted is the self-existent essence or nature of a person. The following description of negative objects is from Kedrup Tenba Dargye's *Overview of Madhyamaka Philosophy* (T: *dBu ma spyi don*): "A negative object is an entity that can only be apprehended when the mind negates some object that is

established through its refutation. This difficulty is like not being able to hit a target with an arrow because you can't see the target, or like not being able to catch a thief because you don't know what he looks like. Therefore, it is vital for us to understand the nature of the self-existent essence that is being refuted.

A self-existent essence is the same as the true mode of existence<sup>41</sup> that is being denied in the phrase "entities are not truly existent." It is also the same as the intrinsic nature<sup>42</sup> that is being rejected in the phrase "entities do not have an intrinsic nature" and the unique identity<sup>43</sup> that is denied in the phrase "entities do not exist by way of their own unique identity." The *Commentary to the Four Hundred Verses* describes it in these words:

Regarding that, the term "self" means an independent intrinsic essence or nature that entities [are wrongly believed to] possess. Selflessness is the absence of that.<sup>44</sup>

directly related to it. There are two types of negative objects: a simple negation and an affirming negation. A simple negation (S: *prasajyapratishedha*, T: *med dgag*) is the type of negative object in which no further entity is implied when the mind negates the object that is related to it. An example is the insubstantiality of the self. An affirming negation (*paryuddāsa-pratishedha*, T: *ma yin dgag*) is the type of negative object in which another entity is implied or affirmed when the mind negates the object related to it. There are four types of affirming negations: (1) an affirming negation that implies another entity directly, (2) an affirming negation that implies another entity indirectly, (3) an affirming negation that implies another entity both directly and indirectly, and (4) an affirming negation that implies another entity based on special circumstances. An example of the first type is the proposition that the insubstantiality of the self exists. An example of the second type is the proposition that Devadatta does not eat food during the daytime. An example of the third type is the proposition that there exists a fat Devadatta who does not eat food during the daytime and yet he is not emaciated. An example of the fourth is the proposition in which someone determines that another person is a member of the Vaishya caste and not a member of the Brahmin caste, given that he knows the person in question is either a Vaishya or a Brahmin, but does not know to which of the two castes he belongs. When this individual asks a third person the caste to which the person in question belongs, this other person—intending only to indicate the caste to which he did not belong—replies that he is not a Brahmin (folio 88a). In Bibliography, see listing under (*mKhas grub*) *bsTan pa dar rgyas*.

<sup>41</sup>S: *satyasiddhi*, T: *bden par grub pa*.

<sup>42</sup>S: *svabhāva*, T: *rang bzhin*.

<sup>43</sup>S: *svārūpa*, T: *rang ngos*.

<sup>44</sup>This is Chandrakīrti's commentary on the root text *Four Hundred Verses* by Aryadeva. It is commonly referred to as the *Commentary to the Four Hundred Verses* (T: *bZhi brgya pa'i 'grel pa*). The term self (S: *ātman*, T: *bdag*), as it is being used here, does not mean the self of personal identity. Rather it means a self-existent essence or nature that all entities are mistakenly believed to possess. This passage appears as part of the commentary to ch. 12, v. 13 of Aryadeva's root text (in *dBu ma* section of Tg., vol. 24 (ya), f. 187b).

As it is being used here, the term “self” refers to an intrinsic nature that exists independently of any other conditions—that is, a self-sufficient and inherent mode of being that does not rely or depend upon anything else.

While simply knowing and using verbal explanations such as these may be enough to silence an opponent in debate, we have not truly recognized the object to be refuted until we identify it within our own experience. For example, we cannot positively identify a thief on the basis of vague descriptions like: “The thief is a man who was wearing white clothes [366b].” Therefore, we must not be satisfied with the level of understanding that is gained by listening to another person’s explanations. Nor should we stop with the theoretical and abstract understandings that are based on verbal descriptions. We must examine our own mind and find there, within the naked reality of our experience, the object to be negated.

If we fail to discover the object to be refuted, we run the risk of falling into the nihilism that destroys the teaching on dependent origination. This is true even though we may try to apply the many arguments that are meant to establish that entities are not truly existent. For instance, suppose you hold the concept of a pitcher in the back of your mind and then deny that the pitcher’s spout is the pitcher or its base is the pitcher, and so on. After successively eliminating each and every part of the pitcher, you might conclude that not being able to identify the pitcher in this way constitutes the pitcher’s emptiness and then proceed to meditate on such an understanding. But this approach fails to recognize that emptiness must be established in relation to a particular object, and that what is being denied of that object must have some clearly defined philosophical import.<sup>45</sup> Instead, it simply obliterates the very concept of a pitcher and identifies its emptiness as a complete nothingness. Such a fanciful interpretation is seriously flawed and will only lead you down a wrong path.

When you try to identify the object to be refuted, you must investigate how the innate mistaken view of the self<sup>46</sup> holds that the self is real because it possesses an inherently real essence. This involves examining both how the self *appears* to our natural, untutored mind and how it is *grasped* by

<sup>45</sup>In this case, the object or basis of analysis is the pitcher itself, and the philosophical import being denied is that the pitcher has any self-existent essence.

<sup>46</sup>There are two forms of the mistaken view of the self: innate (S: *sahajātmagrāhaḥ*, T: *ngar 'dzin lhan skyes*) and conceptual (S: *parikalpātātmagrāhaḥ*, T: *ngar 'dzin kun brtags*). The conceptual form believes the self to be inherently real on the basis of mistaken reasoning. The innate form, which all beings have possessed since beginningless time, believes spontaneously that the self is inherently real and it does so independently of any reasoning. The mistaken belief regarding the self is also known by the technical term “perishable-collection view” (see Day Fifteen, p. 54). Of its two forms, the innate mistaken view is more important, because we cannot gain a correct understanding of emptiness without clearly identifying the way in which it holds the self.

this mind. Introspection will reveal a sense of personal identity that does not regard the self as something that is merely projected by the mind onto the heaps. Instead, it perceives the self as a separate and independent "I" that exists within the collection of your five heaps. All ordinary beings—including worms and insects—hold this belief in the deepest part of their minds, even when they are dreaming. This is what we call the innate mistaken view of the self.

In general, there are three different ways of perceiving the self or person. Those individuals who have gained a realization of emptiness recognize that the self is not truly existent and therefore regard it as something that is merely ascribed by a conceptualizing mind in relation to its basis of ascription<sup>47</sup> [367a]. Ordinary people who have not been influenced by philosophical views can grasp the self in either of two ways. One is indefinite—that is, it neither regards the self as possessing nor as lacking an inherently real essence. A second way of perceiving the self, however, holds that it does possess an inherently real essence.

Of these three, the second one is the correct cognition that establishes the validity of the term "self." The unspecified "I" that is the object of this mind *does* exist conventionally. It is also the agent that performs deeds and the subject that experiences their results. The third way of perceiving the self is the erroneous belief that must be overcome by a proper antidote. A self that exists the way it is perceived by this mind is what must be refuted using correct reasoning.

Put differently, when we go along with the way the self appears to our innate perception and then form such thoughts as "I ate food" and the like, we believe that the self is real. However, the correct way to understand the logical relation between agent and action is to be satisfied with a self that is merely ascribed by an uncritical and unreflective mind, and regard that as the agent who performs the actions described in statements like "I am sitting," or "I am walking." This self only exists nominally and is merely ascribed on the basis of words and concepts.

Part of the way the self appears to our innate mistaken view is also present in the mind that establishes the conventionally valid existence of the self. However, when the self appears to this latter mind, it is commingled with other entities and therefore does not appear with the same clarity and distinctness that it does to the innate mistaken view of the self. It is important to recognize that the self appears to the mind in these two ways. That is, in one the self appears as a self-sufficient entity that possesses an

<sup>47</sup>T: *gdags gzhi*. In the case of the self, the basis of ascription is the five heaps. Most Buddhist schools identify this basis of ascription as the nominal self; however, the Madhyamaka Prasangika School asserts that the basis of ascription and the ascribed object (T: *btags chos*)—that is, the nominal self—are not one and the same.

inherently real essence and in the other it is not recognized as having any particular mode of existence.<sup>48</sup>

Although the innate belief in an inherently real self is continually present in our mind—even when we are dreaming—in most ordinary situations we cannot clearly observe how the self appears to this mind [367b]. However, in certain circumstances, such as when someone praises us or scorns us, something makes us very happy, or we experience some great misfortune, the way the self appears to this mistaken belief *does* become more evident.

For example, if someone accuses you of stealing or of having done some other wrong, you may think, “I have been falsely accused,” and angrily declare, “I can’t accept this!” When you experience this kind of uncontrollable emotional reaction, a vivid and strong awareness of your subjective self also rises from the innermost part of your heart. This “I” is the object that was accused of stealing and that voiced the response: “I can’t accept this!” The way that this “I” presents itself within your mind is the best example of how the object to be negated occurs in the mind.

Similarly, you can use your reaction to any number of experiences like joy, fear, happiness, or suffering as a way of deliberately evoking a strong form of the innate mistaken view of the self. While you are experiencing that state of mind, you should examine how the self presents itself to your consciousness. An example of how to do this is when two people are walking side by side down a road. Just as each individual must keep an eye both on his companion and on the road, when you are examining how the self appears to your mind, the main part of your awareness must remain in the state that represents your innate view of the self. When you have generated a clear image of the object to be negated, you must use a different and subtler part of your awareness to examine how this object appears to your innate view of the self. However, if this examining part of your mind is too strong, it will destroy the intensity of your innate view of the self and the image of the object to be negated will either disappear completely or at least lose its clarity. So it is important to exercise skill when you examine how the self appears to this innate mistaken view of the self.

When you examine how the self appears to this innate belief, it can take on a variety of forms. For example, sometimes the self will appear to be related to the body alone, or it may appear to be related just to the mind [368a]. These are not the way that the self actually appears to the innate mistaken view.

The correct description is as follows. The basis of ascription and the ascribed object are actually distinct elements. Of these, the basis of ascription

<sup>48</sup>The former is the way the self appears to the innate mistaken view of the self (T: *ngar 'dzin lhan skyes*); the latter is the way it appears to the ordinary mind that establishes the conventional validity of the self (T: *tha snyad 'jog pa'i blo tsad ma*).

is the combination of the body and mind, and the ascribed object is the self that is your personal identity. When this self appears within the undifferentiated combination of the mind and body as a vivid and distinct entity that is able to exist on its own and not merely as a verbal designation that is ascribed by the mind, this is the unerring form of the object to be refuted.

If you correctly identify this object, you can refute it easily. However, because this is a very subtle point, some persons err by going too far in what they refute while others do not go far enough.<sup>49</sup>

When we don't try to identify the object to be negated, it is always present in the mind. But even when we do try to identify it, we cannot find it because it remains hidden within the combination of our mind and body. Therefore, consider the following example. If we are traveling along the edge of a steep cliff, we are likely to become afraid and think, "I could fall"; however, we wouldn't think, "My body could fall," or "My mind could fall." This "I" that we believe to be in danger of falling appears as a distinct, substantive entity situated within the undifferentiated combination of our mind and body. When I refer to the mind and body as an undifferentiated combination, I mean that they are perceived as inseparable, like water and milk that have been mixed together in a single container. The image of our personal self that forms in the mind in this kind of situation is the object to be negated.

In the same way, when we see an object such as a galloping horse, we do not refer to the horse's body or its mind as the horse. Nor do we regard the horse as something that is merely nominally ascribed to the collection of a mind and body. Rather, the thing we call a "horse" is perceived as a distinct, substantive entity that appears to be situated within the collection of a mind and body.

When we use terms such as "Sera" and "Drebung," we aren't thinking specifically of the assembly hall and other external buildings, nor do we mean just the monks who reside there. Rather, the image that forms in the mind is of a distinct, substantive entity called "Sera" or "Drebung" that is located within the combination of the buildings and its inhabitants and occupies the same area that they do [368b].

When we refer to someone as Kachu,<sup>50</sup> the mere collection of some person's body and mind serves as the basis of ascription for this title. But the

<sup>49</sup>Je Tsongkapa discusses this topic in great detail in his *Great Stages of the Path*. Positions that go too far in their identification of the object to be refuted (T: *dgag bya khyab ches pa'i lugs*) are criticized in pages 781–860 (ff. 375a–414b); positions that don't go far enough (T: *dgag bya khyab chung pa'i lugs*) are examined in pages 860–870 (ff. 414b–419b).

<sup>50</sup>T: *dka' bcu*. A title of religious scholarship awarded at the Tashi Hlungpo Monastery in Tsang (T: *bKra bshis lhun po*, see Part Two, Day Ten, p. 98, and accompanying note 6), which means "One who has mastered ten difficult subjects."

image that forms in the mind is of a distinct, substantive entity that does not depend on anything else for its existence. As Keutsang Jamyang Mönlam explained, the ultimate object to be refuted by logical reasoning is a particular kind of image that forms in the mind whenever we think of some entity. It is what we are referring to when we call that entity by its name. The nature of this image is that it seems to exist from its own side and to occupy the same area as the qualities that serve as its basis of ascription. This is the same as what is meant by the phrase “the object that is apprehended by the belief in real essences.”<sup>51</sup>

If we don't properly discern the way objects give the appearance of being truly existent, we will end up identifying the object to be refuted as some abstract notion of self-existence that is not a part of our actual experience. But no matter how hard we try to apply the many arguments found in Madhyamaka treatises to analyze a mere verbal understanding of such terms as “self-existent” or “truly existent,” our efforts will only be operating at the level of theoretical concepts and therefore will do nothing to uproot the erroneous belief that entities are truly existent. Having failed to recognize the object to be negated as it naturally appears in the mind, we will invent some new way of perceiving the self as the object to be negated and apply logical analysis to this, which only results in a philosophical view that was created from artificial speculation.

As Losang Chökyi Gyeltsen declared:

The way the object to be negated by reasoning appears to the mind is not any different from the way that entities usually appear to ordinary persons<sup>52</sup> like ourselves. This is because every mental state of an ordinary person is tainted by ignorance and, therefore, every object that appears to the mind of such a person possesses the quality of appearing to be truly existent.

Thus, all the various entities that we ordinary persons perceive—such as our individual selves, our heaps,<sup>53</sup> mountains, houses, and so on—[369a] present themselves in such a way that their conventionally existent nature

<sup>51</sup>*Den dzin gyi mikpey te so* (T: *bden 'dzin gyi dmigs pa'i gtad so*). *Den dzin* is the mind that erroneously “holds” entities to be “truly existent”—that is, to possess real essences. *Mikpey* means that this mind “apprehends” or perceives objects in a certain way. *Te so* refers to the “object” that is “believed” to be truly existent.

<sup>52</sup>*S: prthagjanaḥ*, T: *so so skye bo*. This term refers to any person who has not attained a direct realization of ultimate reality.

<sup>53</sup>That is, the five heaps (S: *skandah*, T: *phung po*) of form, feeling, conception, compositional factors, and consciousness.

and the semblance of being truly existent are commingled. It isn't possible to isolate different elements in our perceptions so that we could say, "This portion of our perception is what gives the appearance of being truly existent and the rest does not have that quality." Every aspect of the perceived object appears truly existent. No object can appear to the mind of ordinary persons like ourselves without being mixed together with the image of the object to be negated. Therefore, the image of the object to be negated—which can also be described as the quality of appearing to be truly existent—is none other than the very way in which entities normally present themselves to our mind.

If we pay no attention to these very ordinary perceptions and try instead to discover the object to be negated somewhere else, we will commit the error that Changkya Rölbey Dorje<sup>54</sup> described in the following lines:

Nowadays, some of the bright minds from our own  
tradition  
Have become attached to terms like "self-existent"  
and "truly existent."  
They take no interest in these concrete and substantive  
appearances  
And go looking for something with horns as the object  
to be refuted.

It's said that in the unobscured vision of Mother's face  
None of these concrete, substantive experiences are found.  
There are many explanations that don't penetrate the most  
essential points  
And I fear old Mother has managed to elude them all.<sup>55</sup>

It is very important, therefore, that we combine the outer factor of a guru's instruction with the inner one of doing spiritual activities that accumulate merit and remove our karmic obscurations. With this as a foundation, we must carefully investigate the object to be refuted with a subtle and penetrating mind. If we succeed in identifying unerringly the object to be negated, each application of a logical proof such as the one based on dependent origination will reduce to dust even a belief in truly existent entities that is the size of Mt. Meru. By following such a method, we will experience

<sup>54</sup>See Day Sixteen, note 19.

<sup>55</sup>*Recognizing Mother: A Spiritual Song of the Correct View* (T: *Lta mgur A ma ngos 'dzin*), p. 10. In Bibliography, see listing under *lCang skya rol pa 'i rdo rje*.



little difficulty achieving a realization of emptiness. As Changkya Rinpoche [369b] declared:

No need to seek it, for it is the seeker himself.<sup>56</sup>

This line tells us that emptiness is not something we have to travel a great distance to find. It is something that we seekers of emptiness have always had with us. Finally, if it should prove necessary, we must be willing to meditate on this topic of identifying the object to be negated for a period of months and even years.

**(ii) The key point of determining the range of logical possibilities**

First, we must form in our mind a clear and unerring conceptual image<sup>57</sup> of the object to be negated. This should be done in the manner that I have just explained. Then we must determine the following: If the "I" that is apprehended by the innate belief in a real self does have a real or self-existent essence, that "I" or subjective self must either be identical with the heaps that are its basis of ascription<sup>58</sup> or it must be distinct from them. We must establish that no other alternative is possible besides these two.

It is a general principle that if anything exists, it must either be one or many. If this is true, it must also definitely follow that if something is truly existent, it must either be a truly existent one or a truly existent many. Therefore, if a truly existent self does exist, there are only two possibilities: either the self is identical with the heaps in a truly existent sense or it is distinct from them in a truly existent sense. Finally, we must determine with certainty that if the self is not consistent with either of these possibilities, then there is no such thing as a truly existent self. When we reach this understanding, we have gained the second key point of determining the range of logical possibilities. To achieve an understanding of this key point, we cannot meditate for just one or two days; we must continue meditating until we gain a firm realization of its full meaning.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>57</sup>T: *don spyi*. In Buddhist epistemology, a conceptual thought (S: *vikalpa*, T: *rtog pa*) perceives its object through an image that is formed by excluding everything that is not the object.

<sup>58</sup>See note 47 above.

**(iii) The key point of determining that the self cannot be identical with the heaps in a truly existent sense**

Begin by bringing to mind the kind of existence that is associated with the object to be negated. Then consider this point: If the self and the heaps were identical in a truly existent sense, they could not appear to the mind as distinct from one another and [370a] they would have to be a complete unity that is not distinguishable in any respect.

This point is based on the following reason. Some entities that have the same essential nature can appear to the mind as distinct objects.<sup>59</sup> However, this false quality of appearing one way while actually existing differently is only valid for entities that are conventionally existent. It is not valid for entities that are truly existent; the way truly existent entities appear must correspond to the way they actually are.

However, if the self and the heaps were identical in a truly existent sense, there would be no need to posit the existence of a self. Thus, the expression “heaps of the self” would be equivalent to saying “heaps of the heaps” or “self of the self.” There would be no purpose in positing a self as something distinct from its heaps. As the *Root Text on Wisdom* declares:

Once it has been established that no self  
Exists separately from the acquisitions,  
The self becomes just the acquisitions  
And so your self becomes nonexistent.<sup>60</sup>

Therefore, your view takes on the fault that there is no “acquirer”—that is, no self—distinct from the “acquisitions” of the five heaps.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>59</sup>For example, the impermanence of sound and its quality of being causally produced are both part of one and the same essence of sound, yet they can appear to the mind as distinct attributes.

<sup>60</sup>*Root Verses on the Middle Way* (S: *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*), ch. 27, v. 5. In Bibliography, see listing under *Nāgārjuna*. The common names that Tibetans use for this text are the *Root Text on Wisdom* (T: *rtza ba shes rab*) and the *Root Text of the Middle Way School on Wisdom* (T: *dBu ma rtza ba shes rab*).

<sup>61</sup>The term being translated here as “acquisition” (S: *upādānam*, T: *nye bar len pa*) in some contexts refers to a category of mental afflictions. It is a participial noun formed from a root that means “to grasp.” There are four types of “grasping”: (1) grasping at sense objects, (2) grasping at views, (3) grasping at [inferior] conduct and ascetic practices, and (4) grasping at belief in a self. This is the sense of the term when it refers to the ninth limb in the twelve-part teaching of dependent origination (See Day Fifteen, p. 77). The term also refers to the act of “acquiring” in the sense of taking rebirth. The five heaps are what are acquired upon taking rebirth and, thus, in this verse they are being referred to as the “acquisitions,” while the self is the agent or “acquirer” who takes them. See also Day Fourteen, p. 2, with accompanying notes

Furthermore, the *Introduction to the Middle Way* states:

That acquirer and acquisitions are one is incorrect.  
In that case, agent and object would become one.<sup>62</sup>

These lines indicate that such a view brings the unwanted consequence that acquirer and acquisitions—as well as a body and the possessor of a body, or a part and a whole—become one and the same thing.

In criticizing the view that the self and the heaps are identical, the *Introduction to the Middle Way* also states the following:

If the heaps were the self, as a consequence of that—  
Because they are many—it, too, would become many.<sup>63</sup>

That is, if the self and the heaps were identical, a number of unwanted consequences would follow, such as these: (1) Just as there are five heaps, there should be five selves; or, just as there is only one self, [370b] there could only be one heap and not five. (2) If the self were identical with the five heaps, there would be no purpose to entering a mother's womb at conception.<sup>64</sup> (3) If the self were identical with the body in a truly existent sense, when the corpse of a dead person is burned to ashes the self would also be reduced to ashes. (4) Just as the self is reborn at conception into a future life, the previous life's body would also take birth again at conception; or, just as the previous life's body cannot take birth again in the next life, neither could the self take birth again at conception. (5) It would not be possible for the self to be reborn in the formless realm. (6) The self would take on the nature of physical matter.

for another use of the term in the expression "afflicted grasping heaps" (S: *sāsravopādāna-skandhāḥ*, T: *zag bcas nyer len gyi phung po*).

<sup>62</sup>T: *dBu ma la 'jug pa*, ch. 6, v. 137. Chandrakīrti gives this explanation of these lines in his autocommentary: "In this instance, the acquirer (S: *upādātṛ*, T: *nye bar len pa po*) is that which performs the act of acquiring—that is, it is the agent. The acquisitions (S: *upādānam*, T: *nye bar len pa*) are that which undergoes the act of being acquired—that is, they are objects. Here it is the self that should be understood as the acquirer, and the five heaps as the acquisitions. Regarding that, if the self were to consist merely of the collection of form, etc., then the agent and the object would become one and the same thing. But this is not held to be so, because then such things as the [four] elements [of earth, water, fire, and air] and their products [the secondary qualities of] visible form, etc., or a pot and the potter [who made it] would have to become one and the same thing."

<sup>63</sup>T: *dBu ma la 'jug pa*, ch. 6, v. 127.

<sup>64</sup>That is, if the self and the five heaps are one, there is no need of "acquiring" new heaps through the process of rebirth—since the old heaps would not be cast off by the self at death.

Similarly, if the self were one with the mind, it would wrongly follow that the self could not become cold or hungry, since the mind does not experience cold or hunger. It would also be improper for a person who was hot, cold, hungry or thirsty to say: "I am cold," or "I am hungry."

If the self were identical with both the body and the mind, it would be meaningless to regard the self as a subject that is distinct from its attributes of a body and a mind, as expressed in such phrases as "my body" and "my mind."

Moreover, if the self and the heaps were one in a self-existent sense, they would have to be identical in every respect including time and place. As the *Root Text on Wisdom* indicates:

If the self were the heaps,  
It would arise and pass away.<sup>65</sup>

Thus, just as the heaps come into being and undergo destruction, the self, too, would be subject to the same kind of arising and disintegration. But this [371a] would mean that just as separate and distinct moments of the form aggregate come into being and then pass away, the self would also be an unrelated series of moments that come into being and pass away.<sup>66</sup>

The following is another error. If the self that exists in different lives has the same essence as the heaps that are present in those separate lives, then the self of a prior life must either be identical in a truly existent sense with the self of this life or it must be distinct from the self of this life. If the two are identical, then the suffering of stupidity that we experienced in a prior life as an animal would also have to be experienced in this life. Similarly,

<sup>65</sup>S: *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, ch. 18, v. 1.

<sup>66</sup>This argument is directed against the Buddhist realist view that the heaps are a series of self-existent physical and mental entities and the nominal self should be identified with some element of that series—for example, either the five heaps collectively or mind consciousness alone. Je Tsongkapa explains the error in this position as follows: "The reason for its incorrectness is that by positing the self as impermanent you fall into nihilism. That is to say, self-existent entities cannot form members of a continuous series in which each succeeding moment arises from the preceding moment, because two contiguous self-existent entities would be completely distinct from one another and therefore the succeeding moment would not be dependent in any way on the one that preceded it" (p. 467). As to how this relates to the self in particular, he notes elsewhere: "Moreover, if you regard [the self] as undergoing a separate arising and passing away with each separate moment, [each of these moments of the self] become distinct in a self-existent sense. In that case, one could not remember one's past lives [as the Buddha did when he declared] '[At that time] I was King Mandhātā,' because the self that existed at that time will have disappeared just as [that persons'] body has, and there will have arisen a self in this life that is distinct from the previous life's self in a truly existent sense" (p. 318).

the happiness that we experience in this life as a human being must also have been experienced in our past life as an animal.

On the other hand, if the selves of two lives are distinct in a truly existent sense, then those two lives would have to be as separate as two totally unrelated persons like Maitri and Upagupta. But then it would not be possible to attain the supernormal wisdom that remembers many past lives. This point is made in the following verse from the *Introduction to the Middle Way*:

Qualities that are related to Maitri and Upagupta  
Do not form one continuum, because they are separate.  
Entities that are distinct in a self-existent sense  
Cannot properly form part of a single continuum.<sup>67</sup>

The *Root Text on Wisdom* also declares:

If this [life] were different [from a previous life],  
It could exist even without that [former life].  
Similarly, while that [former] life still existed,  
One could take birth without having died there.

There would be annihilation and the destruction  
Of deeds. Likewise, deeds performed by one  
Would come to be experienced by another.  
These and other consequences would follow.<sup>68</sup>

Another error is that a deed that someone committed could undergo destruction<sup>69</sup> [371b]. You might think that this error is avoided because even though a previous self has ceased to exist, the next self can experience the fruit of the prior deed. However, this position is still subject to many errors. For instance, it would follow that the result of a deed performed by one self-existent person would be experienced by a different self-existent person. This is known as “meeting with the result of a deed that you did not do.”<sup>70</sup>

<sup>67</sup>T: *dBu ma la 'jug pa*, ch. 6, v. 61.

<sup>68</sup>S: *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, ch. 27, vv. 10–11.

<sup>69</sup>S: *kṛtavipranāśaḥ*, T: *byas pa chud za ba*. This would violate the karmic principle that a deed never loses its power to bear fruit. See Part Two, Day Thirteen, pp. 239–242.

<sup>70</sup>S: *akṛtābhyaḡamakarma*, T: *las ma byas pa dang phrad pa*. This violates the principle that we cannot meet with the result of a karma that we did not perform. See Part Two, Day Thirteen, pp. 238–239.

When contemplation of these errors enables us to reach a sure and certain understanding that the self cannot be one with the five heaps in a truly existent sense, we have gained a realization of the third key point.

**(iv) The key point of determining that the self cannot be distinct from the heaps in a truly existent sense**

After we have determined, in the manner just described, that a truly existent self cannot be one with the heaps, we should conclude: "Now no other possibility remains except that the self and the heaps are distinct in a truly existent sense." Then we should examine the errors that follow from this proposition.

For example, the *Root Text on Wisdom* declares:

It is not correct that the self is distinct  
From the heaps. If it were distinct,  
It could be grasped without the acquisitions;  
Yet it cannot be grasped in that way.<sup>71</sup>

Suppose you had three animals: a goat, a sheep, and a cow. If two of the animals—say, the goat and the sheep—were set apart from the third, it would still be possible to point to the cow and say, "Here is the cow." Similarly, if the self were distinct from the heaps in a truly existent sense, it should be possible to successively eliminate each of the five heaps of form, feeling, conception, compositional factors, and consciousness, and then—after identifying some object that exists independently of the heaps—say, "Here is the self." However, the self cannot be identified in this way.

Several lines of another verse from the *Root Text on Wisdom* say:

If it were distinct from the heaps  
It would lack the heaps' attributes.<sup>72</sup>

If the self were distinct from the heaps in a truly existent sense, a number of errors would follow that contradict conventional descriptions of the self. For example, the self would lack the attributes of arising, disintegrating, and so on that characterize the heaps as composed entities [372a].<sup>73</sup> It would

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., ch. 27, v. 7.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., ch. 18, v. 1.

<sup>73</sup>Only entities that are causally produced or "composed" (S: *saṃskṛtadharmāḥ*, T: 'dus byas kyi chos) have the qualities of arising and passing away, and only such entities could be considered as having substance or being self-existent. Uncomposed entities (S: *asamskṛtadharmāḥ*,

also follow that although the heaps are subject to birth, aging, sickness, and death, and the like, the self would not be. In addition, any benefit or harm done to the heaps would not benefit or harm the self.

There are many other unwanted consequences as well. For example, the idea of an "I" or personal self could arise in relation to objects other than the heaps. Also, as already mentioned, a person would not have to experience the result of a deed that he committed, and a person could meet with the result of a deed that he did not commit.

Therefore, when we gain the sure and certain understanding that the self cannot possibly be distinct from the five heaps in a truly existent sense, we have gained a realization of the fourth key point.

This method of analysis can be summarized as follows. We begin by generating in our mind an image of the object to be negated. Then, without letting this image escape from our mind, we examine it using the argument known as the "lack of identity and distinctness." When we determine that the self cannot exist in either of the two ways addressed in this argument, we will gain the clear and certain understanding that the "I" which is mistakenly held to be truly existent by the innate belief in a self does not exist.

The following analogy illustrates how we reach this understanding. Suppose that you have lost a cow and there are only two places it could have gone. Suppose that you also refuse to accept anyone else's word that the cow cannot be found, so you yourself go to those two places and search high, low, and in between. If after making this search the cow still doesn't turn up, you would conclude with a clear certainty that the cow you are looking for and whose image you are holding in your mind is nowhere to be found.

You should reach a similar conclusion about the object of the innate belief in an inherently real self. That is, you should clearly decide that the self-existent "I," which you previously thought was so distinct that it could be seen with the eye or touched with the hand, doesn't exist at all. When the object of this belief completely disappears and you are certain that this "I" is not real, you have gained a genuine understanding of the correct view as explained in the Buddhist Middle Way School. Those practitioners of sharp

T: 'dus ma byas kyi chos) such as space, the truth of cessation, nirvana, and emptiness have no substance (S: *niravayam*, T: *rdzas su med pa*), and thus could not be self-existent. Nor could an uncomposed self be the object of the belief in a self, because the conventionally existent self is an entity that can act on other objects while uncomposed entities are not capable of such action. Chandrakirti writes in his *Elucidation of the Words* (S: *Prasannapada*): "Regarding that, the heaps have the attributes of arising, abiding, and passing away because they are composed entities. Since the self does not have the attributes of the heaps, it lacks the qualities of arising, abiding, and passing away. Anything that has such a nature could never be designated a 'self,' either because it does not exist at all, like a sky flower, or because it is uncomposed like nirvana. [For the same reasons,] such an entity also could not be the object of the belief in a self" (p. 148).

faculties who have long familiarized themselves with this view [372b] will react as though they had found a precious treasure. However, those of duller faculties will feel a deep fear and apprehension, as though they had lost a precious treasure. Even so, there is nothing especially bad about experiencing this fear.

Once, when the great Je Rinpoche was giving a teaching on the correct view at the Chöding Hermitage near Sera Monastery, Je Sherab Seng-ge became frightened after gaining a realization of emptiness. Because of this, he reached up with his hand and touched the collar of his monk's robe. Realizing what had happened, Je Rinpoche felt pleased and declared, "The one from Nartang has placed something that is conventionally existent on his collar." There is also an account of how several of Je Ngulchuwa's disciples experienced this same fear when he was giving a teaching on the correct view.

After your mind has entered this state of utter emptiness, you may find yourself thinking: "This is emptiness," or "I have realized emptiness." However, because the object of such thoughts is either an affirming negation or an affirmative object,<sup>74</sup> you should not let your mind follow that train of thought. When you gain the realization that the self that you logically refuted does not exist, this understanding should have a cognitive aspect and a perceptual aspect. The cognitive aspect is the firm and certain awareness that the self does not have a truly existent essence. The perceptual aspect is the experience of complete emptiness that comes from merely rejecting the object to be refuted—that is, a truly existent essence. We must use recollection to hold this understanding in our mind and then meditate on it continually.

If our hold on this awareness weakens and it begins to lose clarity, we must first determine whether it is necessary to stop our meditation practice.<sup>75</sup> If we are able to continue, we should again apply the four-point analysis that was explained earlier. After regaining a clear and sharp understanding of emptiness, we should meditate on it continually and one-pointedly.

(Kyabje Rinpoche concluded by making the following two points. Because an absolute emptiness that resembles space appears in the mind when we meditate on this simple negation of a truly existent essence, [373a] this type of practice is called the "space-like realization cultivated during a period of mental composure." This rejection of a false self also causes us to

<sup>74</sup>See above, note 40, for a discussion of affirmative and negative objects, as well as simple negations and affirming negations.

<sup>75</sup>For a discussion of what to do when such difficulties arise, see the section entitled "The fourth fault: failing to apply the antidote," Day Twenty-one, pp. 249–253.



lose our perception of the conventionally existent "I." However, even though we cannot identify the conventionally existent "I" at this time, it isn't necessary to try and verify its existence out of concern that we may be falling into the nihilistic extreme.)

**(b) The realization of illusoriness that is cultivated after a period of mental composure**

If, after rising from the state of mental composure that was just described, we investigate what sort of entity remains in the wake of our having rejected the object to be negated, we will discover that the only thing left of the "I" is its name. This should bring us to the firm and certain conviction that this merely conventionally existent self is like a magically created illusion in the way it accumulates virtuous and nonvirtuous karma and experiences corresponding "white" and "black" maturations.

For instance, a magically created horse and bull are also perceived by the magician who conjures them. With his mind consciousness, however, he knows that they are not a real horse or a real bull and that they are false appearances. At the same time, he still sees directly and incontrovertibly that the magic horse and bull are doing such things as walking here and there.

Similarly, we must understand that the self lacks a truly existent essence and that it is a mere ascription existing in name only. And yet, despite its being unreal, we must also recognize incontrovertibly how the self accumulates karma and experiences happiness and suffering, and how the doctrine of dependent origination and the qualities of agent and object can be validated in relation to it. Thus, at the same time that we perceive the self to exist experientially, we must also maintain the understanding that it is void of any truly existent essence. Similarly, while having established that the self is void of any truly existent essence, we must continue to recognize that it exists experientially. Cultivating this kind of awareness is what it means to train ourselves in perceiving the self as like a magic illusion.

In the early stages of trying to gain an understanding of the correct view, it is difficult to establish in our mind the empty nature of the self, because we are so strongly conditioned to believing that it possesses a truly existent essence. However, when we reach this later point,<sup>76</sup> the difficulty lies in establishing the validity of the conventional self that is perceived experientially. However, as Nagarjuna declared:

The incomparable Tathagata  
Taught this dependent origination

<sup>76</sup>That is, when we are trying to establish that the self is like a magic illusion.

With regard to entities, because all entities  
Are void of any essence [373b].<sup>77</sup>

Thus, because emptiness serves as the very justification for the doctrine of dependent origination, we must recognize emptiness as giving validity to the entities that we perceive experientially. And since emptiness is explained on the basis of dependent origination, we must also recognize dependent origination as giving validity to emptiness.

How dependent origination serves as a proof of emptiness is critically important to this point. For instance, when we seek to prove that an entity such as a sprout lacks a truly existent essence because it is subject to dependent origination, we must refute the way that the innate belief holds the sprout to exist. More specifically, this innate belief holds that the sprout is not merely established on the strength of a name and a term, and that it possesses its own independent mode of being.

Here is how we refute this belief: If, as our innate belief holds, the sprout possessed a self-existent essence, it would be able to exist entirely on its own without relying on any other causes or conditions such as a name or term. But we know this is not true, because direct experience reveals that a sprout only appears when a number of external conditions—such as water, fertilizer, warmth, and the like—are present. And since its existence is dependent on and conditioned by factors that are distinct from it, it is subject to the principle of dependent origination.

In this way, dependent origination serves as a reason or proof for rejecting the extreme that entities possess self-existent essences and exist independently of other factors. This is what is meant by such phrases as “appearances remove the extreme of being”<sup>78</sup> and “perceive how dependent origination supports the meaning of emptiness.”

If a sprout possessed a real essence, it could not be produced through the action of various causes and conditions. It would also be an entity whose essence could never undergo change. However, it is precisely because the sprout does *not* possess a real essence [374a] that we are able to recognize dependent origination as a doctrine in which all logical relations such as cause and effect, agent and object, and so on are valid. This quality of emptiness is what allows a sprout to gradually change into a mature plant, produce grain such as barley, and eventually be eaten by human beings and

<sup>77</sup> *Seventy Verses on Emptiness* (S: *Sūnyatāsaptatiḥ*), v. 68.

<sup>78</sup> “Appearances” (T: *snang ba*) refers to entities that are perceived experientially; “the extreme of being” means the wrong belief that entities possess self-existent essences. This phrase appears in the second of two verses from Je Tsongkapa’s *Three Principal Elements of the Path* that are cited below, p. 293.

animals. This is what is meant by such phrases as “emptiness removes the extreme of nonbeing” and “perceive emptiness as dependent origination.”<sup>79</sup>

The preceding two points are expressed in the following verse from the *Sutra of Questions Posed by the Naga King Anavatapta*:

That which arises from conditions is unarisen;  
Its arising is without any essential nature.  
What depends on conditions is said to be void;  
He who knows emptiness has found mindfulness.<sup>80</sup>

A verse from the *Root Text on Wisdom* also declares:

Because there is no entity whatever  
That does not arise dependently,  
For that very reason there is also  
No entity whatever that is not void.<sup>81</sup>

Similarly, a verse from the *Introduction to the Middle Way* declares:

Because entities only arise dependently,  
It is not possible to form these conceptions.  
Hence, the dependent-origination proof  
Cuts the entire web of wrong views.<sup>82</sup>

Je Lama Tsongkapa also declared:

When your understanding destroys all grasping  
at real objects—  
Not alternately, but as soon as you recognize  
The infallibility of dependent origination—  
Then your analysis of the correct view is complete.

<sup>79</sup>See verse from *Three Principal Elements of the Path* cited on the following page.

<sup>80</sup>T: *Klu'i rgyal po ma dros pas zhus pa'i mdo*. The Sanskrit version can be found in Chandrakirti's *Elucidation of the Words* (S: *Prasannapadā*), p. 214.

<sup>81</sup>S: *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, ch. 24, v. 19.

<sup>82</sup>T: *dBu ma la 'jug pa*, ch. 6, v. 115.

Moreover, when you realize how appearances remove  
 the extreme of being  
 And emptiness removes the extreme of nonbeing,  
 And how to perceive emptiness in causes [374b] and effects,  
 You will not be overcome by any extremist view.<sup>83</sup>

Thus, if we gain an understanding of how emptiness and dependent origination are not simply compatible doctrines but how each actually supports the other, we will develop a deeper realization of, and greater regard for, dependent origination as well as all the explanations of cause and effect, agent and object, and so on that are embodied in it. This will also motivate us to improve our spiritual practice as much as possible. In general terms, we will try harder to abandon misdeeds and do virtuous activities. More specifically, we will try to cultivate loving-kindness, compassion, enlightenment mind, and all the related instructions more strongly. In short, we will become practitioners who strive to carry out a spiritual practice in which the elements of means and wisdom are cultivated jointly and not in isolation.

(Kyabje Rinpoche concluded with this observation: Some people believe that cultivating a high regard for the doctrine of karma and other similar attitudes are suitable for beginning practitioners. Then they teach their own disciples a point of view that discredits the validity of karma and its results, claiming this to be an extraordinary instruction. However, such beliefs are actually no better than the ones held by followers of the Indian Lokayata School.<sup>84</sup>)

## **(2) Establishing the insubstantiality of phenomena**

This section is made up of two parts: (1) establishing that composed entities are not inherently existent, and (2) establishing that uncomposed entities are not inherently existent.

### **(a) Establishing that composed entities are not inherently existent**

This part also has three divisions: (1) establishing that form is not inherently existent, (2) establishing that mental entities are not inherently existent, and (3) establishing that composed entities which are neither physical nor mental are not inherently existent.

<sup>83</sup>Three Principal Elements of the Path (T: *Lam gyi gtso bo rnam gsum*), v. 12–13.

<sup>84</sup>S: *Lokāyata*, T: *Jig rten rgyang 'phen pa*. This school denied the existence of past lives and future lives, and was generally critical of all spiritual traditions. It is also referred to as the Charvaka School.

The explanation that I just gave for developing a firm realization that the self lacks any inherent essence can also be applied to other entities. This point is made in the following lines from a sutra:

Just as you've understood the conception of a self,  
Focus your mind everywhere in the same way [374b].<sup>85</sup>

The *Four Hundred Verses* also declares:

He who has seen one entity  
Is said to have seen all.  
That emptiness of one thing  
Is the emptiness of all things.<sup>86</sup>

### (i) Establishing that form is not inherently existent

Because the minds of ordinary people like us are tainted by ignorance, objects such as form can only be perceived by us in a way that they appear to possess independent essences. And it is this very appearance of having an independent essence that we seek to logically refute. That is, we must refute that entities actually possess the independent essences that they seem to have.

In fact, all entities are subject to the principle of dependent origination. This means that the existence of each entity is dependent upon its own basis of ascription, which is different from the entity itself. The entity is merely projected upon this basis of ascription by means of names and terms. But this is not how objects appear to ordinary persons who have not gained an understanding of the correct view regarding emptiness.

Take an object like a pitcher. To the ordinary person's mind, a pitcher does not appear as merely an ascribed entity whose existence has been projected onto its basis of ascription. Rather, the basis of ascription and the entity projected onto it appear to be combined inseparably. And within this combination, the pitcher is perceived as a distinct and independently existent object. This is how the object to be negated appears to the mind.

Although this is how the object to be negated appears, we can prove that the pitcher does not exist in the way that it is perceived by the innate belief in truly existent entities. This is accomplished by proving that the pitcher is

<sup>85</sup> *King of Concentrations Sutra* (S: *Samādhirājasūtram*), ch. 12, v. 7.

<sup>86</sup> T: *bZhi brgya pa*, ch. 8, v. 16.

neither identical with, nor distinct from, its basis of ascription in a truly existent sense.

We can establish that the pitcher is not identical with its basis of ascription in a truly existent sense, because we know that the basis of ascription and the ascribed entity are distinct.<sup>87</sup> We can also establish that the pitcher is not distinct from its basis of ascription in a truly existent sense, for the following reasons: If we took away the pitcher's basis of ascription, no appearance would be left that we could point to and say, "This is the pitcher" [375b]. Therefore, a pitcher can only appear to a conventional cognition<sup>88</sup> in dependence upon a valid basis of ascription—in this case, a collection of parts that includes a body, spout, base, and so on. By confirming that a pitcher's existence is only valid as a conventional truth entity, we can establish that the pitcher is not distinct from its basis of ascription in a truly existent sense.

It is a general principle that if something exists, it is either one or many. Likewise, if an object is truly existent, it can only be a truly existent one or a truly existent many. If we can show that something is neither of these possibilities, then it is not truly existent. This is how we establish that objects such as a pitcher are not self-existent.

In short, all entities, including form—represented here by a pitcher—are not truly existent, because they are dependent on their respective basis of ascription and therefore cannot exist on their own. As the *Four Hundred Verses* declares:

Because nothing is independent,  
Essences do not exist.<sup>89</sup>

Here is another explanation. Although, in general, a pitcher is a single entity, it is not a single entity in an inherently existent sense because it must rely on its parts, which are multiple. Moreover, while a pitcher is distinct from a pillar, the separateness that is posited with regard to them is merely that each is different from the other in a mutually dependent sense. They are not distinct in the sense that each is a separate, inherently existent entity. If they were, both a pillar and a pitcher would each have to have this quality of separateness in relation to itself. But this would lead to the error that

<sup>87</sup>They are distinct in a conventionally existent sense. That is, the pitcher is a single entity, while its parts are multiple, and so on.

<sup>88</sup>S: *vyavahārapramāṇam*, T: *tha snyad pa'i tsad ma*. Cognition here means a form of knowledge (S: *pramāṇam*, T: *tsad ma*) that establishes the valid existence of conventional truth entities.

<sup>89</sup>T: *bZhi brgya pa*, ch. 14, v. 23.

neither of them was a single entity. Therefore, while a pitcher is distinct from a pillar, it remains a single entity [376a]. And the singularity and distinctness that are both attributed to a pitcher are nothing but mental concepts that are ascribed to a pitcher; they are not qualities that exist inherently in the pitcher. This is described in the following lines from the *Root Text on Wisdom*:

An other is an other in dependence on an other.  
An other cannot be an other without an other.<sup>90</sup>

Several lines from the next verse also state:

If an other were other than an other,  
It would be so even without an other.<sup>91</sup>

#### (ii) Establishing that mind is not inherently existent

Mind<sup>92</sup> is described as an entity that has the properties of clarity and awareness, and it also engages objects. There are many types of mind, such as the main distinction between consciousness<sup>93</sup> and mental states.<sup>94</sup> These two are differentiated on the basis of whether they perceive an object's essence or its characteristics. The existence of mind is limited to that of an entity that is conceptually projected onto a basis of ascription. In this case, the basis of ascription is a collection of many momentary states. Mind does not possess the slightest degree of self-existent essence. However, this is not how mind appears to us. We perceive it as a self-existent entity that can engage an object independently and without having to rely on anything else. Put another way, mind appears to us as an object that, if analyzed, would reveal itself to have a genuine essence. Both of these descriptions express how the object to be negated appears to us.

<sup>90</sup> *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, ch. 14, v. 5.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 14, v. 6.

<sup>92</sup> S: *jñānam*, T: *shes pa*. In Tibetan, *blo* (S: *buddhih*) and *rig pa* (S: *vittih*) are synonyms of *shes pa*.

<sup>93</sup> S: *cittam*, T: *sems*. The Tibetan terms *mam par shes pa* (S: *vijñānam*) and *yiḍ* (S: *manas*) are synonyms of *sems*. Consciousness is described as that which apprehends the essence of its object.

<sup>94</sup> S: *caittaḥ*, T: *sems byung*. Mental states are described as apprehending characteristics of the object.

If, as it appears to be, your mind were self-existent, then today's mind, for instance, would either have to be identical with its various moments in a self-existent sense, or it would have to be distinct from them. If today's mind were distinct from these moments, we could separate it from both the part that exists in the first half of the day and the part that exists in the second half of the day, and still be able to identify some entity about which we could say "this is today's mind." But because today's mind cannot be isolated in this way, it is not distinct in a self-existent sense from the parts of the mind that exist in the first and second halves of the day [376b].

On the other hand, if today's mind were identical in a self-existent sense with the parts that exist in the first and second halves of the day, it would follow incorrectly that—just as those two parts are multiple—today's mind itself would have to be multiple in nature. Another error would be that, just as today's mind exists in the first half of the day, the part of the mind that exists in the second half of the day would also have to exist in the first part of the day. Alternatively, it would follow that, just as the part of the mind that exists in the second part of the day doesn't exist in the first part of the day, neither would today's mind exist in the first part of the day. These and other similar absurd consequences are the methods we must use to gain the sure understanding that mind is not inherently existent because it is neither identical with, nor distinct from, its parts in a self-existent sense.

Another argument is that if the three spheres<sup>95</sup> in an act of perception were identical in a self-existent sense, it would follow erroneously that agent and object are one and the same. On the other hand, if the three spheres were distinct in a self-existent sense, it would have to be true that there could be a perceiving agent even without a perceived object. Or it would be valid for there to be an act of perception even without a perceiving agent. Because of these and other errors, it must be the case that the three spheres in an act of perception are not inherently existent.

Therefore, mind is merely an entity that a conventionally valid cognition projects onto a particular basis of ascription using terms such as "mind" and "awareness." In this case, the basis of ascription is a collection of various conditional factors, including a series of momentary elements that represent the components of mind. Nevertheless, all the causal relations that are described in relation to both samsara and nirvana can be correctly established on the basis of such a nominally existent mind.

<sup>95</sup>The three spheres are: (1) agent, (2) object, and (3) action.



**(iii) Establishing that unassociated compositional factors are not inherently existent**

I will explain this topic using time as an example.<sup>96</sup> A year is nothing more than the perception [of a particular unit of time] that is ascribed in dependence on a collection of twelve months. Nevertheless, the object to be negated is [a particular unit of time] that has the appearance of being the opposite of that.<sup>97</sup>

After gaining a clear understanding of how the object to be negated appears in the mind, the first thing to establish is that a year is not identical in a self-existent sense with its basis of ascription—that is, a collection of twelve months [377a]. This is done by recognizing the absurdity that if a year were identical with its basis of ascription, a year would have to be twelve in number just as its basis of ascription consists of twelve months. Alternatively, the collection of twelve months would have to be a single entity, just as a year is a single entity. Similarly, we can establish that a year is not distinct from its basis of ascription in a self-existent sense, because after eliminating each of the twelve months there would be nothing left that we could point to and say, “This is the year.” This analysis should result in the determination that a year is nothing more than a name ascribed by a conventionally valid cognition in relation to the basis of ascription of

<sup>96</sup>Buddhist philosophy classifies all existent things into composed entities (S: *saṃskṛtāḥ*, T: *‘du byas*) and uncomposed entities (S: *asaṃskṛtāḥ*, T: *‘du ma byas*). Composed entities are those that are produced by causes; uncomposed are those that are uncaused. Composed entities—that is, entities that are causally produced and momentary—are further divided into the five heaps (S: *skandhāḥ*, T: *phung po*): form, feeling, conceptions, compositional factors (S: *saṃskārah*, T: *‘du byed*), and consciousness. The causally produced entities included in the five heaps are of three types: physical matter or form (S: *rūpam*, T: *gzugs*), mind (S: *jñānam*, T: *shes pa*) and the so-called “unassociated compositional factors” (*viprayuktasaṃskārah*, T: *ldan min ‘du byed*). Unassociated compositional factors are a group of nonphysical, nonmental relations that are discussed in Buddhist philosophical literature. Some refer to certain conditions of mental composure in which most mental activity has ceased. Others are more familiar as universal topics of philosophical inquiry. Asanga’s *Compendium of Higher Learning* (S: *Abhidharmasamuccayaḥ*) includes this list of twenty-three: (1) attainment, (2) the state of mental composure in which there is no conception, (3) the state of mental composure in which all mental activity has ceased, (4) the condition whereby mental states are kept from functioning in the state of mental composure where there is no conception, (5) life force, (6) similarity, (7) arising, (8) aging, (9) continuation, (10) impermanence, (11) names, (12) words, (13) letters, (14) the condition of being an ordinary person, (15) continuity, (16) fixed diversity, (17) joining, (18) quickness, (19) sequential order, (20) time, (21) direction, (22) number, and (23) convergence.

<sup>97</sup>More specifically, the object to be negated here is a year that is not merely ascribed in dependence on a collection of twelve months and is an independent and truly existent unit of time.

twelve months. Hence, there is no such thing as a year that exists independently from its own side.

**(b) Establishing that uncomposed entities are not inherently existent**

Uncomposed entities include such things as the two cessations,<sup>98</sup> space, and emptiness. They are called “uncomposed,” because they do not come into being on the basis of causes and conditional factors. I shall explain this topic using the example of space.

The existence of space is established only in a conventionally existent sense as a simple negation.<sup>99</sup> It is the mere absence of obstruction by or contact with a physical object. If the whole of space were identical with its parts in a self-existent sense—that is, if it were identical with the space located in the east, south, west, and north, etc.—then the two aspects of eastern space and western space would become a single entity. And if that were so, then whenever the sun rose in the sky of the eastern continent Videha, it would also rise in the sky of the western continent Godaniya.<sup>100</sup>

On the other hand, if the whole of space were distinct in a self-existent sense from its parts, then the whole and its parts would become completely separate and unrelated [377b]. In that case, it would have to be true that if we eliminated all the parts of space that exist in the cardinal and intermediate directions, as well as in the zenith and nadir, we would still be able to point to some entity and say, “This is space.” Because neither of these possibilities is valid, space does not have a truly existent essence.

(Kyabje Rinpoche concluded this section with a discussion of the following point. Some people believe that emptiness has a truly existent essence.

<sup>98</sup>The two cessations are called “analytic cessation” (S: *pratisamkhyānirodham*, T: *so sor brtags pa'i 'gog pa*) and “nonanalytic cessation” (S: *apratisamkhyānirodham*, T: *so sor brtags pa ma yin pa'i 'gog pa*). The analytic cessation is the permanent condition of having removed any of the two types of mental obscurations. These are all the instances of the third of the Four Noble Truths—that is, the Noble Truth of Cessation. The nonanalytic cessation is defined as a condition in which an event is unable to occur because of the absence of the necessary causes. The *Commentary to the Treasury of Higher Learning* gives the following description: “For example, when [the organs of] the eye and mind are occupied with a particular visible form, all other existing visible forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and tangible objects, move into the past. When that occurs, the five sense consciousnesses that might have been directed toward any of those objects will not be able to arise, because they cannot engage objects that exist in the past.”

<sup>99</sup>See note 40 above.

<sup>100</sup>Classical Buddhist cosmology describes the world as being comprised of four continents. The Tibetan equivalents of the eastern and western continents are Lūpakpo (T: *Lus 'phags po*) and Balangchö (T: *Ba lang spyod*), respectively. For a detailed account, see chapter 3 of Vasubandhu's *Commentary to the Treasury of Higher Learning* (S: *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam*).

However, this view is mistaken and particularly unacceptable. The following sutra passage describes it as one that cannot be remedied:

It would be better to have a belief in the existence of a real self as large as Mt. Meru than to believe that emptiness has a truly existent essence.

We can recognize the error of this position by realizing how even emptiness can be distinguished as having many parts through its basis of ascription. We should also understand how emptiness has many parts based on the range of objects about which it is predicated. We may further consider whether emptiness is either identical with or distinct from these parts in a self-existent sense, and whether emptiness and the objects about which it is predicated could exist independently of one another.

As it is declared in a sutra: "If form itself cannot be apprehended [as being self-existent], how much less then could the suchness of form be perceived.")

### (3) The method of developing insight

Earlier I described how we can achieve quiescence through cultivating the concentrations associated with the nine levels of mental stability and how the mental quality known as agility<sup>101</sup> is related to quiescence. However, even if we can maintain the mental agility associated with quiescence, this alone will not allow us to achieve insight. So now I shall explain the process by which insight is achieved in relation to meditating on the insubstantiality of the self.

As I already explained, the innate mistaken view of the self holds that the "I" or subjective self is inherently existent. Using the four-point analysis, you must gain a certain understanding that the self that appears within the five heaps lacks any such inherently real essence. When you have gained a very clear understanding of this emptiness, use your recollection to keep hold of it firmly. Then cultivate a state of mental equipoise using vigilance to keep yourself from developing languor or excitation [378a].

If your hold on the meditation object shows signs of becoming weak or of losing its clarity, repeat the four-point analysis and other steps as before. When you have regained a firm understanding, again fix your mind one-pointedly on the meditation object of emptiness. Continue meditating this way with the aim of developing mental stability toward this object. When

<sup>101</sup>The two forms of agility (S: *prāśrabdhī*, T: *shin tu sbyangs pa*) that precede the attainment of quiescence are discussed above, p. 263. This mental state is also discussed in Day Twenty-one; see p. 240, note 29, in particular, for a definition.

you gain that stability, then practice analytic meditation energetically using such methods as the four-point proof to examine the meditation object. This exercise can be compared to a small fish darting around in an extremely clear pond whose waters are undisturbed by wind.

(Kyabje Rinpoche concluded the day's discourse with the following description of how to recognize when insight has been attained. After cultivating equal measures of stability and discriminating wisdom for an extended period of time in this way, you will gradually achieve the same nine levels of mental stability that were described before.<sup>102</sup> Finally, through the strength of your analytic meditation, you will develop an extraordinary form of agility that is much greater than what you experienced previously when you were cultivating quiescence. The point that marks the attainment of real insight practice is when your analytic meditation effortlessly changes into placement meditation.<sup>103</sup> In this instance, I have been discussing the insight practice that has emptiness as its object. This type of meditation is also known as the "union of quiescence and insight.")

<sup>102</sup>These are the same nine levels that were explained in relation to quiescence. See Day Twenty-one, pp. 256–260.

<sup>103</sup>Analytic meditation (T: *dpnyad sgom*) is the main type of practice that is applied to all the Lamrim topics with the exception of quiescence. See also Day Sixteen, note 31, as well as Part One, Day Six, note 103 and Part Two, Appendix F. The aim of placement meditation (T: *'jog sgom*) is to focus the mind on an object steadily and one-pointedly. This type of meditation is what is practiced when one is trying to achieve quiescence.