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བརྗེད་བྱང་དུ་བཀོད་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

# Notes on the Eight Difficult Points

Taken as a reminder of Je's teachings

མཛད་པ་སོ། རྗེ་ཙོང་ཁ་པ་སྟོ་བཟང་གྲགས་པ།

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## Dedication

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# Notes on the Eight Difficult Points

I prostrate to the holy venerable ones!

There are eight famous commentaries on Ācārya Ārya Nāgārjuna's *Root Wisdom*. Among those, the ones that non-erroneously interpret his intention are those of Ācārya Buddhapālita and Ācārya Candrakīrti. Although there are countless subtle differences that are discordant with other commentators, the main points are said to be eight:

- In terms of the basis:
  - Not asserting own-character even conventionally;
  - Not asserting an Ālayavijñāna; and
  - Asserting external objects;
- In terms of the path:
  - Not asserting autonomous signs as a method for realising suchness;
  - Not asserting self-knowers;
  - The way of positing the two obscurations; and
  - Asserting that Hearers and Solitary Realisers realise the lack of inherent existence of phenomena;
- In terms of the result: The way in which Buddhas know varieties.

In this way, there are four assertions and four non-assertions.

## 1. Not asserting an Ālayavijñāna

This has two sections:

1. Debate
2. Response

### 1.1 [Debate]

Someone says:

If virtuous and non-virtuous actions remain until the ripening of their results, then they would be permanent; thereby falling into the extreme of permanence. If actions done disintegrate in the second moment, then since disintegratedness cannot be a functioning thing, actions producing fruitions would be impossible; thereby actions done would perish.

### 1.2 [Response]

Some conceive that although actions disintegrate, the potencies of actions enter the Ālayavijñāna; others assert that it is the continuum of the mental consciousness. Some assert that actions disintegrate but assert the existence of the “attainment” of actions and some assert the existence of a separate dharmin called “non-perishing”, which is like a debt contract. In these ways, they respond to the above debate.

Our own response is as follows. Although we do not assert those four (the Ālayavijñāna and so forth), actions done do not perish because despite not asserting those, this is not contradictory with disintegrated actions producing results.

If someone says:

Reason not established because disintegratedness cannot be a functioning thing.

Although disintegratedness cannot be a functioning thing if own-character is asserted, we do not assert own-character even conventionally. Therefore, disintegrated and non-disintegrated actions are equally functioning things.

Moreover, no one who asserts own-character also asserts disintegratedness to be a functioning thing. The reason is that they assert that functioning things are suitable to dawn as an object of awareness independently, without depending upon the negation of another phenomenon. With disintegrated actions, they assert that first there is the dawning of the action that will disintegrate as an object of awareness and then, apart from the mere negation of that, there is absolutely no independent dawning of anything else.

It is incredibly easy for those who do not assert own-character to prove that disintegratedness is a functioning thing: It follows that disintegrated and non-disintegrated actions are equally functioning things because 1) an invariable cause and effect relationship established from the side of the object does not exist also for non-disintegrated actions and 2) an invariable cause and effect relationship that is merely designated through conventions exists also for disintegrated [actions].

If someone says:

Reason not established because disintegratedness is merely the negation of a functioning thing and therefore causes would not be able to perform any function whatsoever.

In that case, actions would also become causeless because those already established do not need to perform any function whatsoever.

Moreover, having established disintegratedness, it is not asserted that the cause of disintegration<sup>1</sup> does anything else in particular; it merely functions to disintegrate.

In the same way that an invariable relationship is perceived because an action does not exist at the time of its cause and then subsequently arises, the disintegrated action also does not exist at the time of the action and then subsequently arises; therefore, the invariable relationship of previous and later moments with respect to the action is established.

Moreover, if disintegratedness is not asserted as a functioning thing, then this contradicts sutras saying “Through the condition of birth, ageing and death.” because they indicate birth to be a condition for death. Statements including disintegratedness within the compositional factors aggregate would also become incorrect.

Therefore, since the production of actions is not inherently established, their disintegratedness is not inherently existent. As such, those that are designated by mere name as disintegrated and non-disintegrated are the same in being functioning things.

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<sup>1</sup> Tib: *zhig rgyu*; i.e. the functioning thing that will disintegrate.

Therefore, despite not asserting an Ālayavijñāna and so forth, disintegratedness produces results and therefore actions done will not perish. With this in mind, Ācārya [Nāgārjuna's *Root Wisdom*] says:

Since actions are without production,  
Due to that, they lack inherent existence;  
Since actions are unproduced,  
Due to that, they will not perish.

If someone says:

In that case, does the non-existence of pot and so forth also become a functioning thing?

Since that is posited merely through the negation of a valid cognition that observes pot and those two are not established sequentially, then it is not the same.

If disintegratedness produces results, then asserting an Ālayavijñāna and so forth becomes meaningless; this is completely the same for ourselves and others.

## 2. Not asserting an own-character even conventionally

The reason for this is that, in general, if one asserts own-character as ultimately established, then one becomes a Proponent of Things; those who assert that, despite not being ultimately established, it is conventionally established are the Svātantrika-Mādhyamikas; and that not being established even conventionally is the assertion of the two Ācāryas.

If own-character is refuted ultimately but establishment by own-character is asserted conventionally, then:

- It would follow that the Āryas' exalted wisdom would be the cause for destroying things; and
- Due to emptiness becoming an emptiness of a separate object, it would not be self-emptiness.

If things are established by their own-nature, then that would be established as their suchness; therefore, that would be suitable to be perceived by the Āryas' meditative equipoise. In that case, when directly realising emptiness, things would be realised as non-existent because 1) if something exists, then it is suitable to be perceived by the Āryas' exalted wisdom of meditative equipoise but 2) [things] are not perceived. Therefore, the realisation that things that previously exist are non-existent when emptiness is manifest, i.e. that very exalted wisdom, would become the destroyer of things; just like a pot is destroyed by a hammer.

Moreover, Cittamātrins assert that non-dual consciousness is truly existent and that it has an emptiness by way of refuting external objects. In accordance with that, things become other-empty and do not become self-empty because despite refuting an ultimately established nature, they do not refute establishment by own-nature.

The meaning of statements in the [*Ratnakūṭa*] *Sūtra*<sup>2</sup> such as:

Emptiness does not make phenomena empty; phenomena themselves are just empty.

And so forth are properly explained in this way.

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<sup>2</sup> Specifically, the ārya-kāśyapa-parivarta-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtra; “*stong pa nyid kyi*” amended to “*stong pa nyid kyis*”.

Therefore, phenomena that are dependent-arising function by way of mere name and mere terms and for that, their inherent existence must first be refuted; since inherent existence must be refuted upon that which functions, inherent existence is refuted also conventionally.

If someone says:

In that case, wouldn't the classification into real and unreal conventionalities become unfeasible?

A classification of real and unreal in relation to what is able and unable to perform a function in accordance with its mode of appearance is asserted as unfeasible because appearances to worldly consciousnesses are pervaded by not being established in accordance with their appearance.

Nevertheless, a classification into real conventionalities and unreal conventionalities is feasible in relation to just worldly consciousnesses:

- The illustration "blue" illustrates "real conventionality" as: 1) That which is a conventional truth and 2) it not being established in accordance with its appearance cannot be realised without realising suchness.
- The illustration "reflection" illustrates "false conventionality" as: 1) That which is a conventional truth and 2) it can be realised as not established in accordance with its appearance without relying upon the realisation of suchness.

Just as it is for objects, the classification into real and unreal conventionalities is also feasible for object-possessors. The Svātantrikas do not make this classification into real and unreal conventionalities also with respect to object-possessors because they assert that it is impossible for the self-knowing direct perception to which they appear to be mistaken with respect to their appearing objects; therefore, a classification in terms of being able and unable to perform a function in accordance with their mode of appearance is impossible.

If someone says:

If there is no inherent existence even conventionally, then conventional truth would be impossible; therefore, there would not be two truths to posit.

That which is true from the perspective of conventional thinking is conventional truth; there is no fault that truth would be impossible conventionally.

Regarding the two truths, there are four sections:

1. Illustrations
2. Definitions
3. Valid ascertainment of the definitions upon their illustrations
4. The way in which Āryas' meditative equipoise perceive suchness



## 2.1 [Illustrations]

In accordance with [Candrakīrti's *Supplement to the Middle Way*]:

All things hold two natures:

Things found by correct and false perception. [6.23]

Inner and outer things abide as two objects:

1. Those found by conventional consciousnesses and that even the childish can realise; and
2. Those found by valid cognition analysing the ultimate, i.e. the cultivation of the Āryas' path toward the view together with its results.

Among those:

- Blue and so forth that are renown to the childish as being true are conventional truths; and
- Blue's lack of inherent existence is an ultimate truth.

It is incorrect to say that blue and so forth are conventional truths from the perspective of the childish because the realisation of blue as a conventional truth is necessarily preceded by the elimination of the superimpositions of the apprehension of true existence.

## 2.2 [Definitions]

Someone says:

The definition of conventional truth is: The various appearances of dependent-arising.

The definition of ultimate truth is: That which is 1) free from the elaborations of inherent existence and 2) beyond being the cognised-object of determinative consciousnesses and terms.

If that were the case, then the childish who have not understood the view would also realise the meaning of conventional truth by means of direct perception and therefore will eliminate the superimpositions of the apprehension of true existence through the force of direct valid cognition. In that case, it follows that those persons would become Āryas!

Negations that are established as mere eliminations would also become ultimates because they are 1) free from the elaborations of inherent existence and 2) beyond being the cognised-object of determinative consciousnesses and terms; because they are not determinatively established.

The previous reason is established because if they were not free from the elaborations of inherent existence, then they would be truly existent.

Therefore:

- The meaning of conventional truth is: That explicitly found by conventional valid cognition.
- The meaning of ultimate truth is: That explicitly found by a reasoning consciousness analysing the ultimate.

## **2.3 [Valid ascertainment of the definitions upon their illustrations]**

This has three sections:

1. Ascertainment of the definition of ultimate truth
2. Ascertainment of the definition of conventional truth
3. How to differentiate between conventional truths and mere conventionalities

### **2.3.1 [Ascertainment of the definition of ultimate truth]**

When a sprout is explicitly realised by a reasoning consciousness to lack of inherent existence, then the inverse of what is realised by that reasoning consciousness is implicitly realised because the superimpositions of directing the awareness to the non-inherently-existent sprout and not explicitly finding it are eliminated by the reasoning consciousness.

The definition is also implicitly realised through the valid ascertainment of the illustration.

### **2.3.2 [Ascertainment of the definition of conventional truth]**

In order to establish blue as that found merely through a mistaken conventional consciousness, it is necessary to establish that the valid cognition cognising blue is a mistaken consciousness and that depends upon the realisation by a reasoning consciousness that it is not established by own-character in accordance with how it appears to that apprehension of blue. Therefore, the definition is ascertained in dependence upon both the reasoning consciousness analysing the ultimate and the conventional consciousness cognising blue.

### **2.3.3 [How to differentiate between conventional truths and mere conventionalities]**

Someone says:

Blue and so forth are conventional truths from the perspective of the childish. From the perspective of the subsequent attainment of the three lower Āryas, they are mere conventionalities and not conventional truths.

If that were the case, then Āryas would not be able to non-erroneously explain the classification of the two truths because conventional truths are impossible from the perspective of their awarenesses.

Therefore, “mere conventionalities” are posited from the perspective of the subsequent attainment of Hearer and Solitary Realiser Foe-Destroyers and Bodhisattvas who have attained mastery. The meaning is to indicate that no conventional awarenesses positing forms, sounds, and so forth, to be truths exist in their continua; it is not indicating that conventional truths such as forms, sounds, and so forth, are not established from the perspective of their conventional awarenesses.

Conventional awarenesses positing [those] as truths exist in the continua of Hearer and Solitary Realiser Learner Āryas as well as Ārya [Bodhisattvas] on the seventh ground and below because manifest afflictive obscurations exist [in their continua]. Therefore, forms, sounds, and so forth, should not be referred to as “mere conventionalities” from the perspective of their subsequent attainments.

Therefore, the mistake is in not individually distinguishing the two:

1. Forms, sounds, and so forth, not being established as truths from the perspective of the conventional awarenesses in the continua of those persons; and
2. Forms, sounds, and so forth, not being established as conventional truths from the perspective of their conventional awarenesses.

## **2.4 The way in which Āryas' meditative equipoise perceive suchness**

Sutra says:

The non-perception of anything is the highest perception.

The meaning is as follows. For example, if an obstructive form exists [somewhere], then its non-observation despite being suitable to observe would be referred to as perceiving space. Similarly, the Āryas' meditative equipoise realises the lack of true existence because if [something] truly existed, then it would be suitable to be observed whereas it is not observed.

Moreover, [the Āryas' meditative equipoise] necessarily overcome all elaborations of appearances without exception because if conventionalities appear to those who have not completely abandoned the obscurations, then they necessarily appear as truly existent and therefore it would necessarily become a mistaken consciousness.

Conventionalities do not exist from the perspective of observing suchness because if something exists from the perspective of that, then it is necessarily established as its suchness whereas those are not established as their suchness.

## **3. Asserting external objects conventionally**

Yogācārins say:

A mere mind that is without external objects is established as suchness.

If you ask what is the illustration for that, they respond that it is like in a dream. This is unfeasible because just as true external objects do not exist in the dream, the existence of true minds is also not established; if experience is inferred from the sign that the consciousness is remembered when awake, then objects would exist also in the dream because there is memory [of those] when awake.

If they say:

The dream consciousness is produced from the ripening of imprints of consciousness to which objects appear through the condition of sleep and not through the power of the objects.

If you ask them, "Why is it that when blind people are awake, consciousnesses to which blue and so forth clearly appear are not produced?"

Then they say:

Due to lacking the condition of sleep.

In that case, just as consciousnesses to which blue and so forth clearly appear are not produced when blind people are awake, those would also not be produced while dreaming because both are the same in not having eye-faculties. You asserted the reason.

Therefore, just as when awake, false eye-faculties, forms, and the consciousnesses to which they appear are produced, similarly, those three also exist when dreaming; just as those three do not exist from the perspective of manifest suchness, similarly, those three of the dream do not exist when awake.

If someone says:

If eye-faculties, forms, and so forth, exist at the time of the dream, then they would also be perceived at the time of waking.

If that were the case, then it follows that they are also non-existent when awake because they are non-existent from the perspective of manifest suchness. If the waking consciousness together with its objects are established despite not existing from that [perspective], then the consciousness together with its objects are established also while dreaming.

Therefore, from the perspective of conventional valid cognition both objects and minds are equally existent and from the perspective of thinking about suchness both are equally non-existent; therefore, the assertion that objects do not exist but consciousness exists is illogical.

## **4. Not asserting autonomous signs**

This has two sections:

1. General presentation of autonomous and other-renown signs
2. It is suitable to not assert autonomous signs

### **4.1 [General presentation of autonomous and other-renown signs]**

Since the two Ācāryas do not assert either autonomous valid cognition or cognised-objects, autonomous signs are impossible; it is not indicating that only autonomous syllogism-statements are impossible.

Madhyamaka-Svātantrika and below assert autonomous valid cognition to be:

A valid cognition that is autonomously non-mistaken with respect to the object of the mode of apprehension without depending upon others' assertions.

And autonomous signs to be:

A sign possessing the three modes ascertained by that.

Therefore, since those are impossible, it is indicated that the realisation of the suchness of things is only by way of other-renown.

Although the root of the valid cognition that ascertains the autonomous three modes is asserted by the Svātantrikas to be dependent upon direct perception that is non-mistaken with respect to the specifically-characterised, the specifically-characterised apprehended by that is taken by these Ācāryas to be the object of negation by reasoning.

The terms Prāsaṅgika and Svātantrika are suitable for the Mādhyamikas in accordance with how they are taken by previous [masters] or, alternatively, they are divided into two Mādhyamikas:

1. Those that realise suchness by way of asserting autonomous [i.e. svātantra] signs; and
2. Those that generate a realisation of suchness by way of other-renown signs without asserting those bases.

The difference between those two signs is that:

1. That possessing the three modes posited by an autonomous valid cognition that is non-mistaken with respect to the object of the mode of apprehension without depending upon others' assertions is referred to as an autonomous reason; and
2. That which is not like that but rather possesses the three modes ascertained by valid cognition in dependence upon others' assertions is referred to as an other-renown reason.

Some assert:

Prāsaṅgikas are those who refute others' wrong conceptions merely through the three modes asserted by others or the limits of their assertions; Svātantrikas are those who engage by way of ascertaining the three modes with valid cognition.

Others differentiate them as:

Prāsaṅgikas are those who merely refute the truths of others but do not prove their non-truth; Svātantrikas are those who also prove their non-truth.

Since I have already extensively explained that these are incorrect elsewhere, I will not write this here as a reminder.

## **4.2 [It is suitable to not assert autonomous signs]**

It follows that when the Mādhyamikas prove that a sprout lacks inherent existence to the Proponents of Things, then “sprout” is not suitable as the subject sought to be known of an autonomous sign because at that time, when it is sought as to whether the two – the existence-isolate of the basis (i.e. the sprout) and its inherent existence (i.e. the property of the negandum) – appear as distinct meaning-isolates or not, they are asserted by the Proponents of Things to not appear distinctly but to appear as one.

If someone says:

In that case, that would be unsuitable as the subject of a correct sign.

There is no such fault because an inferential cognition realising a sprout lacks inherent existence can be generated by way of “a sprout ascertained by valid cognition as a dependent-arising” being established as the property of the position and indicating a valid cognition whereby dependent-arising undermines inherent existence.

If someone says:

When the previously unperceived undermining valid cognition exists as suitable to be perceived, if it is impossible to have doubt with respect to the pervasion, then it would be impossible to generate that inference, whereas if there can be a doubt, then it would be pervaded by being an autonomous sign because there is doubt with respect to whether or not the sign “dependent-arising”, which has already been ascertained with valid cognition and not forgotten, inherently exists.

There is no such fault because if autonomous signs exist, then the two – the existence-isolate of the basis-subject and the property of the negandum – are pervaded by being suitable to appear as distinct meaning-generalities even long before understanding the view; whereas that is impossible for the existence-isolate of dependent-arising and its inherent existence.

Moreover, if an autonomous subject sought to be known is unsuitable when proving that a sprout lacks inherent existence, then it is also not suitable when it has already been proven; therefore, it is unfeasible. While the valid cognition realising sprout is functioning and has not degenerated, it is possible that a coarse undermining valid cognition is perceived and for there to then exist a doubt thinking, “Is it feasible to posit a sprout as lacking inherent existence?” Therefore, in general, it is suitable to be ascertained as the subject sought to be known of a correct sign.

In short, for innate [awarenesses], valid cognitions with an established common appearance exist in the continua of both the Proponents of Things and the Mādhyamikas;<sup>3</sup> therefore, they are suitable for generating a realisation of suchness. When there is no common appearance posited by tenets, then autonomous signs are not suitable.

If someone says:

When the Buddhists prove to the Vaiśeṣikas that sound is impermanent, “sound that is arisen from the elements” is not established from the perspective of the Vaiśeṣikas and “sound that is a quality of space” is not established for the Buddhists; however, just “sound” is established for both. Similarly, in the context of the debate between the Mādhyamikas and Proponents of Things, just “sprout” that is not qualified by either truth or falsity is established for both. Therefore, that is suitable as a subject sought to be known of an autonomous sign.

The example and meaning are not the same because although there would exist a valid cognition with respect to just “sound” stripped of distinguishers, a valid cognition with respect to just “sprout” that is not a valid cognition with respect to sprouts own-character nor a valid cognition with respect to a sprout devoid of own-character would not be asserted by either the Mādhyamikas or Proponents of Things to be established as either of the two truths.

This is because when the Prāsaṅgikas wish to generate inferences among one another with respect to conventional objects, a subject posited by tenets and established as commonly appearing exists; however, that does not become an autonomous sign because a valid cognition that is non-mistaken with respect to the object of the mode of apprehension is impossible.

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<sup>3</sup> Changed from “and both” in accordance with Geshe Jampa Gelek’s explanation.

## 5. Not asserting self-knowers

This has three sections:

1. Stating the position that asserts them
2. Indicating that as incorrect
3. Positing our own system

### 5.1 [Stating the position that asserts them]

[Asserters of self-knowers] say:

On the basis of a single substance of consciousness, there exist the two:

1. The aspect of the apprehended, which is outwardly-directed and is the part that is the self-knower's object; and
2. The aspect of the apprehender, which is inwardly-directed and is the part that is the agent.

Otherwise, although blue is realised by direct perception, a valid cognition ascertaining that direct perception would not exist and therefore also blue itself would not be established by valid cognition. Therefore, a single substance of consciousness possesses self-knowing with a distinct object and agent.

The existence of that can also be understood from the mode of apprehension of memory. In general, all memory follows from experience. In particular, when remembering "I previously saw blue", there is the memory of blue and the memory of seeing blue; inferring from that, the existence of both an experiencer of blue and an experiencer of seeing blue is established. This establishes the existence of self-knowers. Moreover, since non-dual consciousness is also established by self-knowers, the proof does not become an infinite regress.

### 5.2 [Indicating that as incorrect]

Memory established by own-character that is stated as a sign has already been refuted by the refutation of the four extremes of production.

Even if it is merely a conventionality, it would not be suitable as a sign in the proof of self-knowers because prior to ascertaining the probandum, self-knowers are not established with respect to the example and establishing the existence of mere experience does not establish the existence of self-experience because it is just like inferring fire-glass from mere fire is indefinite.

Moreover, it follows that memory being produced from experience is incorrect because of being other; just like the memory and experiences of Maitreya and Upagupta. It is also unsuitable to make distinctions by way of a single continuum, cause and effect, and so forth, because also those are undermined by being different substances. If a single substance contains both a distinct agent and object, then they would become ultimate agent and object and therefore, due to asserting self-knowers, one is forced to assert self-production despite not wishing to.

### 5.3 [Positing our own system]

Although it is possible to infer mere experience from the sign “memory”, it is not possible to infer self-experience from self-memory 1) because, as was previously explained, an example does not exist and 2) because the sign “memory of blue” establishes that a knowing of blue preceded it and that establishment of the knowing of blue has already established just the knower. The proofs of self-knowers and so forth are the meaningless conceptualisations of others!

When remembering “Previously I saw...”, the rememberer themselves takes the experiencer themselves as an object; therefore, although self-knowing does not exist, self-memory is feasible. Moreover, the aspect of blue having dawned, the explicit experiencer of blue deposits the imprint for remembering blue; due to that, the production of a memory of the object is feasible. When blue is explicitly realised, the apprehension of blue is implicitly realised and is therefore able to deposit the imprint for remembering the apprehension of blue. Therefore, despite the non-existence of an experiencer of the apprehension of blue, the production of its memory is feasible.

Those who assert self-knowers cannot posit the apprehension of blue as being implicitly realised because they assert that if it were, then self-knowers would not exist.

With the meaning of this in mind, the *Supplement’s Autocommentary* says:

Since it is not the case that what is experienced by experience is not experienced by the consciousness remembering that, memory arises together with an object. Since that which is determined by the experiencing consciousness is not determined by the memory of that, one will also say “I saw...”.

Indicating that in the context of the object it is called “experience” and in the context of the object-possessor it is called “determining”.

## 6. Asserting that Hearers and Solitary Realisers realise phenomena’s lack of inherent existence

When the subtle object of negation (inherent establishment) is refuted with respect to the person, then one can also realise that the aggregates (its basis) lack of inherent existence merely through remembering the previous pervasion and reason; therefore, their realising phenomena as lacking inherent existence is established.

It cannot be posited that merely through realising the non-existence of a self-sufficient substantially existent self whose characteristics are discordant with the aggregates, one realises the selflessness of phenomena; moreover, merely through that, the object of negation of the selflessness of persons cannot be completely negated. This will be explained below.

If phenomena’s lack of inherent existence is not realised, then one can also not be posited to have attained liberation. In the context of the sutra statement “I have eliminated all production. I have relied upon pure conduct. I have done what needed to be done. I will know no other existence than this.”, it would not be logical for the Foe-Destroyer with remainder to give rise to a consciousness thinking “I have eliminated production.” because they have not realised their present suffering as not being inherently produced.



If someone thinks:

That is said in terms of not taking another future birth, despite their present suffering being established by own-character.

This is also incorrect because in the extensive explanation of the first three phrases, it says “Having completely abandoned this suffering...” and up to “able”, therefore, the phrase “I have eliminated production.” is indicated to be illustrating their present suffering as not inherently produced because 1) the proximity term “this” is mentioned and 2) in terms of future suffering, the extensive explanation of the final phrase indicates “not connecting to other suffering” and so forth.

If someone says:

This is indicated in terms of the abandonment of the afflictions by direct perception while with remainder; it is not taken in terms of actualising the elimination of the aggregates.

In that case, rather than saying “this suffering”, it would be logical that it says “Having completely abandoned these afflictions” but it does not state as such.

If someone says:

Suffering is also posited as a general category for the appropriated aggregates. Since a general term applies to its instances, the term “suffering” is being applied to the afflictions.

If it is seen that the application of a general term only to the generality is sometimes unsuitable, then it is suitable to apply it to the instances; however, here it is not unsuitable with respect to the generality and therefore it is not suitable that the general term be applied only to the instances. This should be extensively understood from the Commentary on [Nāgārjuna’s] *Sixty Verses on Reasoning*.

Therefore, since [Nāgārjuna’s] *Root Wisdom* extensively proves by way of scriptures and reasoning that Hearers realise the selflessness of phenomena and the intended disciples of the *Root Wisdom* are all three lineage-bearers, Ācārya Candrakīrti asserts it to be a treatise common to all vehicles. Ācārya Bhāvaviveka asserts that Hearers lack the realisation of the selflessness of phenomena and therefore that it is an uncommon Mahayana treatise.

## 7. The way of positing the two obscurations

This has two sections:

1. The assertions of the Cittamātra
2. The assertions of the Madhyamaka

### 7.1 [The assertions of the Cittamātra]

Although all the Ācāryas agree that afflicted ignorance is a knower that is the discordant class opposite to exalted wisdom, Ācāryas Asaṅga and Vasubandhu assert that:

- Ignorance is an awareness that does not realise and is merely obscured with respect to the mode of abiding of the aggregates; and
- The view of the transitory collection is an afflicted wisdom, included within wrong conceptualisations, that superimposes a self of persons and what belongs to that self.

Ācāryas Dignāga and Dharmakīrti assert that the view of the transitory collection is also an afflicted ignorance. That is not contradictory with explaining it to be concomitant with ignorance because they assert that it is one part of ignorance, just like saying “a forest with palāśa trees”, and therefore is explained to be together with ignorance.

They assert that such afflictions together with their seeds are the afflictive obscurations and the conception apprehending apprehendeds and apprehenders as different substances together with its seeds are the knowledge obscurations.

The apprehension of the person as self-sufficient substantially existent (characteristics that are discordant with the aggregates) is the apprehension of the self of persons and merely through having familiarised with refuting its conceived-object, one is able to be liberated from Samsara. Regarding this, the Cittamātra and Madhyamaka-Svātantrika are in agreement.

### 7.2 [The assertions of the Madhyamaka]

In the Madhyamaka system, the Svātantrikas assert the afflictive obscurations in accordance with how they are identified in the lower tenets and the knowledge obscurations as awarenesses that apprehend true existence together with their seeds.

Regarding the Madhyamaka-Prāsaṅgika or “Other-renown” system, there are four sections:

1. Indicating the Svātantrika system as unfeasible
2. Refuting their elimination of faults
3. Presentation of our own system
4. Dispelling objections regarding that

#### 7.2.1 [Indicating the Svātantrika system as unfeasible]

This has two sections:

1. Actual refutation
2. The reason these faults apply

### **7.2.1.1 [Actual refutation]**

If the view that one is liberated from Samsara merely through familiarisation with the person being empty of self-sufficient substantial existence (characteristics that are discordant with the aggregates) were complete, then also the familiarisation with apprehendeds and apprehenders being empty of being different substances would be the thoroughly complete view of suchness through which one attains omniscience.

If they say:

Since despite refuting apprehended and apprehenders being different substances, there are still the superimpositions of the apprehension of the consciousness as truly existent to be eliminated, then in order to attain omniscience, it is necessary to realise the consciousness as empty of true existence.

Since despite having refuted the previous self, there are still the superimpositions of the apprehension of the person as inherently established to be eliminated, then in order to be liberated from Samsara, it is necessary to also realise the selflessness of persons that is the person's lack of true existence.

### **7.2.1.2 [The reason these faults apply]**

Just as a coarse and subtle selflessness of phenomena is indicated in the Mahayana scriptural basket, also a coarse and subtle selflessness of persons is indicated in the Hinayana scriptural basket.

The main disciples of the previous are the Mādhyamikas to whom the refutation of the subtle object of negation should be indicated and the secondary disciples are the Cittamātrins to whom the coarse selflessness of phenomena should be indicated. Similarly, the main disciples of the latter are the Hearers to whom the subtle selflessness of persons should be indicated and the others are the secondary disciples.

Moreover, since the realisation of the coarse selflessness of persons and the realisation of the impermanence of the person are equal in either being or not being what cuts the root of Samsara, then in order to be liberated from Samsara it is definitely necessary to realise the person as lacking inherent existence.

### **7.2.2 [Refuting their elimination of faults]**

The Ācārya Bhāvaviveka asserts:

If the awareness apprehending the person as truly existent were the apprehension of the self of persons, then those faults would equally apply; however, we assert that consciousness itself is the person; therefore, the apprehension of the true existence of the person apprehends consciousness as truly existent; therefore, it is the apprehension of the self of phenomena that apprehends the aggregates as truly existent.

This is incorrect because the person is the appropriator of the aggregates and the aggregates are its appropriated-object; therefore, it is illogical that the appropriator and the appropriated are one. Since the apprehension of the self of persons you assert is acquired and not innate, those whose minds have not been affected by tenets would not possess the cause for birth in Samsara and just as the realisation that there is no elephant in a wall cavity cannot overcome the fear of apprehending the existence of a poisonous snake there, the realisation of such a selflessness will not liberate from Samsara.

### 7.2.3 [Presentation of our own system]

The apprehension of true existence together with its seeds are the afflictive obscurations and the imprints of mistaken dualistic appearances are the knowledge obscurations.

The apprehension of true existence is afflicted ignorance and:

- That which is the view of the transitory collection but not an apprehension of the self of persons is the view of the transitory collection apprehending “mine”;
- That which is an apprehension of the self of persons and not the view of the transitory collection is the apprehension of other persons as truly existent;
- That which is both is the view of the transitory collection apprehending the “I” as established by own-character; and
- That which is neither is the apprehension of the aggregates as truly existent.

Statements in [Nāgārjuna’s] *Seventy Verses on Emptiness*, [Candrakīrti’s] *Supplement*, and so forth, that the apprehension of true existence itself is the afflicted ignorance that is the cause of Samsara are the correct proofs for Hearers possessing the realisation of the selflessness of phenomena.

### 7.2.4 [Dispelling objections regarding that]

If someone says:

If the previous coarse apprehension of the self of persons is a view of the transitory collection, then it is contradictory that one will not be liberated from Samsara by familiarising with the realisation of the non-existence of its object. If it is not a view of the transitory collection, then the conception apprehending apprehendeds and apprehenders to be different substances would also not be an apprehension of the self of phenomena.

Although it is a view of the transitory collection, since it is acquired and not innate, there is no such fault.

If someone says:

However, it is possible to produce clear appearance through familiarisation with such a selflessness of persons and since the produced clear appearance with respect to a selflessness validated by valid cognition would become a yogic direct perception, then also through that one would be liberated from Samsara.

Although it is possible to produce clear appearance through familiarisation with just that, it is not possible to produce the realisations of the path of preparation; therefore, there is no such fault.

In that case, through what is it understood that that apprehension of self is acquired?

For innate awarenesses, no fault is perceived in the convention of saying “I am injured” when it is just the hand that is injured; therefore, understand that there is no such apprehension of the “I” and the aggregates as having discordant characteristics or as separate self-sufficient substantially existents.

Similarly, the conception apprehending apprehendeds and apprehenders to be different substances is also acquired and not innate because 1) apprehended and apprehenders are cause and effect and 2) in the world, there is no innate awareness apprehending cause and effect as different substances. This is because there is no fault perceived in the convention of having planted the seed of a tree, later looking at the tree, and thinking “I planted this.”

If someone says:

In that case, production from other would be refuted by conventional consciousnesses.

Worldly beings do not apprehend cause and effect as existing as different objects; their non-existence as established by own-character different objects is realised by a reasoning consciousness.

In our own system, since the innate view of the transitory collection observes the person and cannot observe the aggregates, then neither a part of the aggregates nor their collection is suitable as the illustration of the person because the appropriator and the appropriated are not suitable to be one and because the person is merely designated in dependence upon the aggregates; therefore, neither the aggregates themselves nor an object separate from the aggregates is feasible as the person. This should be understood from the section on the seven-fold analysis of the chariot.

In that case, what is the explanation regarding the twenty views of the transitory collection, such as form being the self and so forth?

Although these observe the aggregates, they are acquired and not innate because it is indicated that they are completely abandoned when the result of Stream-Enterer is attained.

## **8. The way in which Buddhas know varieties**

If someone says:

They do not directly know phenomena that are dependent-arising together with appearances of true existence because if that were the case, then since they have eliminated appearances of true existence, they would also eliminate mere appearances of objects.

If accepted: Since they have also eliminated awarenesses apprehending true existence, then they would necessarily have eliminated mere object-possessing awarenesses; therefore, either Buddhas have no object-possessing awarenesses or they have not abandoned the apprehension of true existence.

That being the case, how do they directly know varieties while being free from appearances of true existence?

When dependent-arising are directly realised as lacking inherent existence, appearances of true existence are necessarily eliminated because otherwise, due to ultimate truth's discordant class explicitly appearing, it would be mistaken with respect to its appearing object.

Moreover, when directly perceiving the ultimate mode of abiding of dependent-arising, appearances of true existence are necessarily eliminated due to truths being impossible among dependent-arising and their mode of abiding being non-mistakenly perceived.

Similarly, also when dependent-arising keep functioning while devoid of inherent existence and their mode of being is non-mistakenly perceived, appearances of true existence become clear appearances of true existence and therefore they are realised with direct perception while being empty of the appearances of true existence.

Alternatively, it should be understood as follows. When someone with clairvoyance looks at a person with a fever, they perceive with direct perception the wrong appearances of objects to the person with fever but they do not become mistaken because it is not a wrong appearance through the power of a fault in one's own awareness. Similarly, although all appearances of true existence are directly realised by the exalted wisdom knowing varieties, it does not become mistaken because true existence does not appear through the power of the inner-awareness.

## [Classification of interpretative and definitive meaning sutras]

As a side topic, the classification of interpretative and definitive meaning sutras should be understood; regarding this, there are two sections:

1. How the Cittamātrins differentiate the interpretative and definitive and in dependence upon which sutras
2. The way in which the Mādhyamikas differentiate and in dependence upon which sutras

### 1. [How the Cittamātrins differentiate the interpretative and definitive and in dependence upon which sutras]

They follow the *Sutra Unravelling the Thought*. The *Sutra Unravelling the Thought* was taught in response to ten questions by Bodhisattvas. Among those, I will briefly explain the brief indication settling the meaning of the questions and answers when the Bodhisattva Paramārthasamudgata asked about interpretative and definitive meaning.

This has four sections:

1. The question asked by the Bodhisattva
2. The Teacher's response
3. Confirming the meaning of the response
4. How that establishes what is interpretative and definitive meaning

#### 1.1 [The question asked by the Bodhisattva]

The Bhagavān in the First Teaching and so forth said that all phenomena, such as the aggregates and so forth, are established by way of their own-character. However, in the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra*, he said that all phenomena are without nature, unproduced, unceased, pacified from the beginning, and naturally passed beyond sorrow.

Among those, [the Bodhisattva Paramārthasamudgata] asked “What was the intention and purpose for stating that they are “without nature”<sup>4</sup> and so forth?”

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<sup>4</sup> Tib: *ngo bo nyid med pa*; this is the technical term used in Tsongkhapa's texts and is slightly different to the words of the sutra (*ngo bo nyid ma mchis pa*); it forms the technical language for discussion of the three non-natures: “character non-nature”, “production non-nature”, and “ultimate non-nature”. However, for the discussion to make more sense, they have been translated more naturally as “without character-nature” etc.

When the way they are without nature was explained, then the intention for saying that they are established by own-character could also be easily realised; therefore, he did not ask regarding the intention and so forth of those [statements].

## **1.2 [The Teacher's response]**

This has three sections:

1. Explanation of the intention behind “without nature”
2. Explanation of the intention behind the remaining four
3. The purpose for ascertaining it as such

### **1.2.1 [Explanation of the intention behind “without nature”]**

This has two sections:

1. Identifying the intention behind “without nature”
2. The reason for teaching using the term “without nature” and an example

#### **1.2.1.1 [Identifying the intention behind “without nature”]**

Intending the three – without character-nature, without production-nature, and without ultimate-nature – [the Bhagavān] said that all phenomena are without nature.

What are those three? They are the completely imputed, other-powered, and thoroughly established.

#### **1.2.1.2 [The reason for teaching using the term “without nature” and an example]**

The reason for indicating the completely imputed as “without character-nature” is because 1) they are merely posited by name and terms and 2) they are not established by own-character.

The reason for indicating the other-powered as “without production-nature” is because 1) they arise through the power of other conditions and 2) they are not a nature that is produced from self.

Regarding “without ultimate-nature”, there is the explanation with respect to the other-powered and the explanation with respect to the thoroughly established

A completely pure observed-object is that which if realised, is an observed-object that will liberate from the obscurations; therefore, it is called “ultimate”. Since such completely pure observed-objects that are referred to as “ultimate” are not established to be other-powered, then the other-powered are referred to as “without ultimate-nature” because through observing those, the afflictions will increase. [This meaning applies] also to nominal conventionalities.<sup>5</sup>

Since the thoroughly established are “ultimate” and are not things, they are referred to as “without ultimate nature”.

Examples: Just like sky-flowers are non-things, so are the completely imputed. The other-powered are illusion-like because despite objects appearing to consciousnesses with dualistic appearances as separate external objects, they are not established as external; they are not illusion-like in terms of being the collection of appearing as truly existent and being empty of true existence. The thoroughly established are indicated using the example of space that is the negation of obstructive form.

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<sup>5</sup> Tib: *rnam grangs pa'i kun rdzob*; i.e. permanent phenomena not included within the thoroughly established, but are a subdivision of the completely imputed.

### 1.2.2 [Explanation of the intention behind the remaining four]

Due to the completely imputed being without nature, that is connected to being unproduced by nature. For the other-powered, it is connected to being unproduced in the nature of self-production.

This also eliminates the wrong conceptions of those saying that the intention behind stating “without nature” in the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* are the completely imputed and other-powered, whereas the thoroughly established are established as truly existent things. This is because all the natures are indicated as intended-bases and because both the other-powered and thoroughly established are indicated as being established by own-character.

### 1.2.3 [The purpose for ascertaining it as such]

The childish cycle in Samsara due to strongly conceiving the other-powered and bases of the thoroughly established (that are devoid of the two selves), as truly in the nature of the completely imputed in accordance with how they are imputed by their conceptions.

In order to be liberated from Samsara, first they create disillusionment with Samsara through the other-powered being indicated as without production-nature; then, they will be liberated from Samsara through the completely imputed being indicated as without character-nature and the thoroughly established being indicated as without ultimate-nature.

With the intention that the path realising the selflessness of persons and its result (complete liberation) are not different in all three vehicles, a single vehicle is indicated. However, the final vehicle is not definite to be the Great because faculties are naturally individual and definite as the three – sharp, middling, and dull – and therefore, Hearers who proceed only to peace will never attain Buddhahood.

## 1.3 Confirming the meaning of the response

The Bodhisattva Paramārthasamudgata said that he had understood the meaning of the three natures indicated by the Teacher as follows.

The intention is to indicate that:

- The imputations by conceptuality qualifying all phenomena (from forms and up to omniscience) with nature and attributes are the completely imputed;
- The bases for such imputations, consciousnesses with dualistic appearances, are the other-powered; and
- Those being empty of the two selves are the thoroughly established.

As such, those that were indicated to be established by own-character are the other-powered and thoroughly established; whereas those that are not established by own-character are the completely imputed. Since the two – the other-powered and thoroughly established – are indicated as the intended-bases of the enumerated non-natures, the way in which they have and do not have a nature should be understood as such in all sutras.



#### 1.4 [How that establishes what is interpretative and definitive meaning]

Initially, in the Deer Park called “Sages Propounding”, [the Bhagavān] taught those correctly engaging in the Śrāvakayāna that all phenomena are established by own-character; this is not literal. In the middle, he taught that all phenomena are without nature; this is also not literal.

In that case, what is?

In the *Sutra Unravelling the Thought*, [the Bhagavān] taught those correctly engaging in all vehicles that the completely imputed are not established by own-character, whereas the other-powered and thoroughly established are established by own-character; thereby, this Dharma Wheel possessing correct differentiation of the teachings through correctly distinguishing the intention of existence and non-existence is of definitive meaning.

Therefore, those who hold that only sutras indicating the Tathāgatagarbha as permanent and stable and so forth are illustrations of Final [Turning] statements that are definitive meaning and those who hold that the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* are the illustration of [definitive meaning sutras] are merely blinded by darkness and do not extensively realise the meaning of the question and response.

Therefore, the ways of differentiating existence and non-existence in accordance with this Sutra is the definitive meaning.

## 2. The way in which the Mādhyamikas differentiate and in dependence upon which sutras

The [differentiation] follows the *Teaching of Akṣayamati Sutra*. This has three sections:

1. Etymology of the interpretative and definitive
2. Divisions
3. Definitions

### 2.1 [Etymology of the interpretative and definitive]

The meaning of interpretative and definitive is meaning that requires further interpretation and that which is definite as that meaning, [respectively]. It should not be taken merely to be statements in order to lead<sup>6</sup> disciples because definitive meaning would also be interpretative meaning.

For example, when indicating “Form is produced”, it is not the exhaustive meaning of the suchness of form; there is still more to be interpreted. When indicating “Form lacks inherent existence”, that is the definitive meaning of the suchness of form; since there is nothing further, it is the definitive meaning.

When interpretative and definitive are taken as a meaning that requires further interpretation and meaning that is definitive as that, [respectively,] then the conventional and ultimate truths (as the subject-matter) become interpretative meaning and definitive meaning, [respectively].

When interpretative and definitive are taken as that requiring and not requiring further interpretation as another meaning, then their expressers are divided into interpretative and definitive.

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<sup>6</sup> Tib: *drang ba*; this verb (used in the term “interpretative meaning”, Tib: *drang don*) can mean “to interpret” but also “to lead”.

## 2.2 [Divisions]

This has two sections:

1. Indication in terms of the definitions
2. Indication in terms of the illustrations

### 2.2.1 [Indication in terms of the definitions]

Indicated in terms of the disciples:

- Statements in order to engage in the path are interpretative meaning;
- Statements in order to engage in the result are definitive meaning.

The path is wisdom realising lack of inherent existence and the method for engaging in that is teaching impermanence and so forth.

The result is passing beyond sorrow and the method directly engaging in that is the realisation of the lack of inherent existence.

In terms of the subject-matter:

- Teachings on the conventional are interpretative meaning;
- Teachings on the ultimate are definitive meaning.

Although teachings on the self-isolate of illusion-like conventionalities are definitive meaning, teachings on their illustration-isolates, e.g. sentient beings, and so forth are taken as [interpretative meaning].

### 2.2.2 [Indication in terms of the illustrations]

Teachings on sentient beings, persons, and so forth and teachings on emptiness, signlessness, and so forth, [respectively].

## 2.3 [Definitions]

Definitive meaning is the collection of the two: 1) explicit teachings on ultimate truth and 2) possessing validity. Interpretative meaning is other than that.

The previously explained *Sutra Unravelling the Thought* is interpreted by Ācārya Candrakīrti as being exclusively of interpretative meaning; Ācārya Bhāvaviveka explains that indications that the other-powered exist by own-character are literal; Ācārya Kamalaśīla, in terms of settling the intention behind “without nature”, explains that this sutra proves that statements on “without nature” in the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* are definitive meaning and establish its system.

## The intention of the previous explanations

Through the wisdom realising that emptiness is the meaning of dependent-arising and that even a mere atom of inherent establishment does not exist, one will master the collection of the two: 1) destroying all focal-objects of apprehending signs and 2) the complete feasibility of all agents and objects.

When referring to emptiness as the meaning of dependent-arising:

- They are not suitable as name and meaning because dependent-arising would not be realised without realising emptiness.
- The object is also not the meaning of the object-possessor because dependent-arising is not suitable as its object-possessor.
- The expressed-object is also not the meaning of the expresser because dependent-arising is not its expresser.
- They are also not suitable as explicit and implicit meaning because emptiness cannot be implicitly realised by explicitly realising dependent-arising.
- They are also not negatively and positively determined<sup>7</sup> because even if a dependent-arising is explicitly determined, emptiness cannot be negatively determined.

Therefore, is the phrase “emptiness is the meaning of dependent-arising” not devoid of subject-matter?

We do not propound that emptiness is the meaning of dependent-arising in relation to the above persons who have not understood the view. Rather, when the wisdom realising the not even a mere atom of inherent establishment exists has been produced, it is realised that the existence of phenomena cannot be posited from their own side even in the slightest and they are perceived as exclusively existing in dependence upon other. At that time, when explicitly ascertaining the meaning of the term “dependence”, then the emptiness that is not existing from their own side is implicitly ascertained and an awareness explicitly ascertaining emptiness is immediately induced. This is the indication of emptiness as the meaning of dependent-arising.

Since the extensive meaning of these has already been indicated in the stages of the path, I will not write them here as a reminder.

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<sup>7</sup> Tib: *rnam bcad yongs gcod*; a pair that are negatively determined and positively determined are, for example, by negating permanence on the basis of sound, impermanence is determined on the basis of sound.

### **[Gyältsab Je’s Colophon]**

In order for the advice spoken by the virtuous spiritual friend to not decline, the Gelong Darma Rinchen (who abides in the practices of the supreme vehicle) has written these as reminders. Through this may the precious teachings flourish, spread, and remain for a long time!

OM SVASTI

For the tree that thoroughly encompasses all the Conqueror’s teachings, the source of all happiness, to thoroughly thrive and that its excellent fruit of the supreme liberation of all migrators be enjoyed, may the slow-moving inexhaustible stream of giving Dharma flourish in this auspicious place of Dharma.

SUPRATISHTA VAJRE SVAHA

SARVA MANGALAM

### **[Translator’s Colophon]**

This text was written by Gyältsab Je in accordance with Je Tsongkhapa’s teachings. It is included in both Je Rinpoche’s and Gyältsab Je’s Collected Works (gSung-Bum). In Gyältsab Je’s Collected Works the title is “Memorandum on the Eight Difficult Points that are the Root of Madhyamaka” (*dbu ma’i rtsa ba’i dka’ gnad brgyad kyi brjed byang bzhugs so*); the final verse of auspiciousness is only found in this version.

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