

These notes were taken by a student in class and should be used for reference only. Please check them against the audio for accuracy of content.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class One: Testing the Buddha's Word

This course is from the point of view of the Mind-Only School. They have a different view of emptiness than the Middle-Way School, and studying their views clarifies the correct view of emptiness.

དང་ངེས།

DRANG NGE **The study of how to interpret what the Buddha really meant.**
figurative literal

དང་དུས།

DRANG DUN **Figurative.** The words spoken are intended to be taken figuratively. For example, Lord Buddha once said, "Kill your mother and your father." He didn't mean it literally. He was exaggerating for effect, and really meant that if your home life strongly distracts you from your spiritual goals, you should leave.
figurative truth

ངེས་དུས།

NGE DUN **Literal.** The words spoken are intended to be taken literally.
literal truth

Three Meanings of Literal versus Figurative

1. **Expressions.** Words can express either the literal intended meaning of the speaker, or the figurative meaning. If speaking literally, then the words and the intended meaning match each other. If speaking figuratively, the words don't correspond to the real meaning. For example, in the first turning of the wheel of the Dharma, Lord Buddha said, "All the things around you that you see, exists from their own side, with their own nature." Then a few years later on Vultures Peak he said, "Actually, nothing has its own nature; nothing exists from its own side, with any quality of its own." Then in the third turning of the wheel he said something that contradicted both of these earlier statements. So he must have been speaking figuratively in two of these cases. Most of this course will focus on the expressions of Lord Buddha and whether they should be taken literally or figuratively.
2. **Reality.** Does the way an object appears to us and the way it really is match? This is on the level of reality. Figurative reality is where the object is lying to you, appearing in a way that is different from the way it really is; this is the deceptive reality all around us.
3. **Understanding.** This refers to two states of mind:

ཚད་མ།

TSEMA A **valid perception** (*skt., pramana*), roughly a correct or accurate perception. For example, seeing five fingers on your normal hand. Virtually all of your perceptions are valid perceptions. Valid perceptions are on the level of literal perceptions, meaning that your understanding validly matches the way things really exist.
valid perception

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class One, continued

ཡི་དབྱེད།

YI CHU
approximation

Approximate understanding. This is on the figurative level, meaning that your understanding only roughly matches how things are.

The Bodhisattva's Question

དོན་དམ་ཡང་དག་འཕགས་ལུ་པའི་ལཱུ།

DUNDAM YANGDAK PAK SHUPAY LEU
bodhisattva Paramarta Samutgata proffer chapter

The chapter of the bodhisattva's question. This is *the* source for the Mind-Only School. It appears in the

Sutra on the True Intent. This chapter was spoken by Lord Buddha in response to the question proffered by the bodhisattva Dundam Yangdak Pak. In the third part of Lord Buddha's life, the bodhisattva approached Him and asked "Lord Buddha, in the first turning of the wheel you taught seven great subjects – like the five heaps, the four arya truths, the eight-fold arya path, the eighteen parts of a human being, the twelve doors of sense, and all these beautiful ways of looking at the world – and you always said that these things existed from their own side, that they had some nature or reality of their own. Then on Vulture's Peak you started saying that nothing exists from its own side, nothing has any nature, nothing has any definition from its own side, the things around you don't exist the way you think they do. So what did you really mean? We know that you are infallible, so please tell me which statement is true, or do some things exist by definition and some things don't exist by definition?"

The Four Great School of Ancient India

1. **Middle Way.** This is the highest school.
2. **Mind Only.** This school forms the main basis of this course.
3. **Sutrist.** This school includes logic and perceptual theory.
4. **Higher Knowledge,** or *Abhidharma*.

Traditionally, Middle-Way and Mind-Only Schools are mahayana (higher way), and Sutrist and Higher Knowledge schools are Theravada or hinayana (lower way). The thing that most distinguishes the four schools is the way they explain emptiness. Lord Buddha taught all four schools, but three and a half of them are wrong about emptiness. You need to understand all the views of emptiness because in any human audience in any time in human history, when emptiness is explained, approximately one part of the audience will naturally latch onto one of each of these four views. These are the four personality types or ways of thinking about emptiness that people have before they even hear about Buddhism. So if you know the four schools, you will be able to help people who are at any particular level of understanding.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class One, continued

Understanding Emptiness Stops All of Your Suffering

སྟོང་པ་མི་ཤེས་པས་འགྲོ་བ་འཇལ་མཁས།

TONGPA MI SHEPE DROWA KYAM **People wander around hopelessly hurting themselves because they don't understand emptiness.** If you understand where your suffering comes

from you can stop it. The reason your body gets old is that you don't understand emptiness. This quote is from the *Sutra Requested by Rajupali*. If you can grasp the Mind-Only School's view of emptiness, which is not exactly correct, you will be much more likely to grasp the correct understanding of emptiness which is the view of the Middle-Way Consequence School, or *madhyamika prasangika*. You must reach this view clearly if you want to really stop your suffering. **Compassion, calm meditation, reciting prayers, etc., in themselves are not enough to stop your suffering. You must understand emptiness.**

Using Skillful Means To Teach Emptiness

The Buddha uses two special methods to bring us to a correct understanding of emptiness.

ཐབས་ཚུལ།

1. TAP TSUL **Skillful means.** The Buddhas know that you have to see emptiness skillful means directly in order to stop the suffering in your life, including your aging and death. So they trick you into thinking about emptiness; out of compassion, they use sneaky techniques, or skillful means, to bring you to higher understandings of emptiness. Lord Buddha taught lower views of emptiness which students of lesser capacity were able to handle until they could be brought up to higher levels.

རིགས་པ་བརྒྱ།

2. RIKPA GYA **Countless good reasons.** The Buddha uses hundreds of good reasons 100 different approaches in teaching students to see emptiness directly which is *the* goal of your Buddhist practice.

How We Decide What the Buddha Really Meant

You can't use the Buddha's words alone when you are interpreting whether or not he was speaking literally at any point in time. When he was teaching emptiness to students of lesser capacity, he also acted like he was speaking literally, so how can you accurately determine when he was really speaking literally?

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class One, continued

ང་ཡི་བཀའ་བསྐྱེགས་བཅད་བདར་གསེར་བཞིན་གུས་ཕྱིར་མིན།།

NGA YI KA SEK CHE DAR SER SHIN GU CHIR MIN
my words melt it cut it rub it gold treat it like believe it don't

Lord Buddha himself said, **Don't just believe what I teach; treat it like gold: melt it, cut it, rub it.** Buddhists have to examine and test all of the teachings to see if they are worthy to be followed:

--**Melt it**, *sek*, means to test it against your own direct experience.

--**Cut it**, *che*, means test it against your own logical analysis, and whether or not the Buddha's words are internally consistent.

--**Rub it**, *dar*, means do his words contradict an authority who you reasonably believe to be speaking the truth. For example, you build up a relationship with a great Lama over a period of years and you realize that they would never intentionally mislead you or claim something that they didn't know to be true. Do the words of the scripture contradict what you believe from this authoritative source?

Don't Judge Others

The three turnings of the wheel generally correspond to three historical periods of Lord Buddha's teachings, but the turnings of the wheel are really defined in terms of the content of the teaching. For example, when he taught that all things exist by definition it was a teaching of the first turning of the wheel, regardless of when it was taught. He taught all of the lower school beliefs for the benefit of people who weren't ready for the highest teaching on emptiness. You can even consider that a teaching on emptiness that accords with the lower school's understanding is correct in the sense that it is the right level of teaching to suit that particular audience. Therefore, you should never criticize another Dharma teacher or group – if you're a normal person you don't know that it isn't just a case of the Buddha emanating as a teacher who is attracting students to the Dharma by teaching a simplified version that these students can handle. It doesn't mean that you shouldn't debate them when the time is right. However, the bodhisattva vows require you to avoid criticizing and judging other people. If Lord Buddha can pretend to believe four different views of emptiness during his lifetime, then why can't Buddhas be doing it today?

The Texts for this Course

དང་ངེས་ལེགས་བཤད་སྐྱོང་པོ།

DRANG NGE LEKSHE NYINGPO
interpretation well-spoken essence

The Essence of Eloquence on the Art of Interpretation. It was written by...

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class One, continued

ཇེ་ཙོང་ཁ་པ་པ།

JE TSONGKAPA

Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419) was the greatest Tibetan monk and thinker who ever lived, and was the teacher of the first Dalai Lama. He wrote 10,000 pages of amazing teachings. They say he was taking dictation from Manjushri, or that he was Manjushri. *The Essence of Eloquence on the Art of Interpretation* is the very heart of his writings.

The two sutras taught by Lord Buddha, which are commented on by Je Tsongkapa as well as by the early Indian teachers, are:

མདོ་སྡེ་དགོངས་འགྲེལ།

1. **DO DE GONG DREL** *Commentary on the True Intent of the Sutras.* This is the primary source for the teachings of the Mind-Only School. "Sutra" means a brief sermon spoken by the Buddha, and this book is his commentary on his own sutras. This is the sutra where Lord Buddha answered the bodhisattva's question about the contradictions between the first turning and the second turning of the wheel.

འཕགས་པ་སྣོ་གྲོས་མི་ཟད་པས་ལྷུས་པའི་མདོ།

2. **PAKPA LODRU MI - SEPE SHUPAY DO**
realized being wisdom never-ending requested sutra

The Sutra Requested by the Arya Named Never-Ending Wisdom. This is the source for the Middle-Way School's explanation of when Lord Buddha was speaking literally or figuratively.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Two: The Three Attributes of the Mind-Only School

The Bodhisattva's Question

In the third turning of the wheel, in the tenth chapter of the *Sutra of the True Intent*, the bodhisattva says, "Lord Buddha, in the first turning of the wheel you taught us about the four arya truths, the five heaps, the twelve doors of sense, the six elements, the eighteen categories, the thirty-seven categories of enlightenment, including the eight fold arya path, etc. and all these things exist by definition. Then in the second turning of the wheel you basically said that nothing has any nature of its own, nothing starts, nothing stops, everything is in a state of peace and everything is in a state of nirvana. So what did you mean when you said nothing has a nature of its own?"

Lord Buddha's Answer

Lord Buddha responds by making fine distinctions about things, explaining that some things do have a nature of their own and some things don't have a nature of its own.

ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད།

NGOWO NYI ME **Nothing has a nature of its own.** The Middle-Way School says
nature of its own no that this is literally true – everything is a projection of your mind.
But Lord Buddha here gives the bodhisattva a response, and says
that he didn't literally mean that nothing has a nature of its own. He said that this statement
really refers to three things which make up the content of tonight's class.

Lord Buddha's answer to the bodhisattva's question is not literally true. The fact that Lord Buddha could intentionally respond in this incorrect way has two implications:

1. When you explain Buddhism to other people, it may be necessary to make simplifications which might be technically wrong. This is okay if it keeps your audience engaged and is for the purpose of bring them up to a higher level when they are ready.
2. You never know whether or not any spiritual teacher is speaking figuratively on purpose in order to attract students of lesser capacity – so you should never judge other teachers. You can evaluate the truth of their statements, but never criticize other teachers. His Holiness, the Dalai Lama frequently adjusts his message to fit the audience, so you can't be sure that some other teacher isn't also adjusting their message to suit a particular audience's capacity.

Three Meanings of No Self-Nature

1. Nothing Has a Definitive Nature: Constructs

མཚན་ཉིད་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད།

TSEN NYI NGOWO NYI ME
definitive nature of its own no

Nothing has a *definitive* nature of its own.

If you say "fire is hot by definition," it doesn't mean that the definition of fire is to be hot. It means that the very nature of fire is to be hot.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Two, continued

ཀུན་བརྟགས།

KUN-TAK **A construct.** It means an imaginary thing or a construct of the mind.
construct A construct can apply to something that doesn't exist, like a rabbit's horns, or a flower that could grow in mid air without any water or soil; or it can apply to something that does exist, like our boy Tashi. Several days after a baby boy is born, the parents decide to name him Tashi, and from then on they think of him as "our boy Tashi," which is a construct. You must distinguish between the three things involved:

1. The little blob of flesh that is the **object** out there.
2. The parents' **minds** that are thinking of the boy in a certain way. Their constructing minds are applying names (let's call him Tashi) and thoughts (he's our little baby Tashi).
3. The **construct** "that's our boy Tashi" which rests between the little baby and the parents' minds.

2. Nothing Grows Through Its Own Nature: Dependent Things

སྐྱེ་བ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ།

KYEWANGOWO NYI MEPA **Nothing grows through of its own nature.** This
grow nature of its own no statement refers to things that grow, or dependent
things, and its meaning can be stated in two ways:

1. **Positively:** anything that grows, must have a nature of growing from its own causes and conditions.
2. **Negatively:** nothing has a nature of growing without its causes and conditions.

The biggest example is the suffering of your life. It has causes which you can figure out and stop. Negatively, nothing bad that happens to you just happens by itself without specific causes. This phrase refers to the second of the three attributes:

གཞན་དབང།

SHEN - WANG **Dependent things.** Things that have a nature of growing from
other power causes and conditions, and don't have a nature of growing on
their own. For example, your aging and death are at the mercy
of your ignorance. Dependent things are changing and caused
things, but they don't have a nature of growing by themselves;
they can only grow from other causes.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Two, continued

3. Nothing Has a Nature of Being Ultimate: Totality

དོན་དམ་པ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ།

DUNDAMPA NGOWO NYI MEPA **Nothing has a nature of being ultimate.**
ultimate nature of its own no This has two meanings:

1. **Constructs are not ultimate**, because they are just imaginary things; they don't have any existence from their own side.
2. **Dependent things are not ultimate**, because when you are perceiving ultimate reality directly you are not perceiving a changing thing – you are perceiving emptiness, which is unchanging. Emptiness is just the absence of a self-existent thing. A changing thing isn't ultimate because it is changing and comes from other causes. This phrase refers to the third of the three attributes:

ཡོང་གྲུབ།

YONG - DRUP **Total existence, or totality.** This is the Mind-Only School's term for emptiness. Literally, *yongdrup* means "everything exists," and it means that the minute an object exists it is 100% empty.

Existing by Definition

རང་གི།མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ།

RANG GI TSEN NYI KYI DRUPPA **Exists by definition.** It means to have some self-nature definition by exists nature of existing from its own side through some unique way of being. Negatively, it's not just made up from your mind. According to the Mind-Only School:

- **Constructs** don't exist by definition because they're just made up with your mind. So they don't have a definitive nature of their own.
- **Dependent things** do exist by definition because they aren't just imagined things; rather, they are coming from their own side through a unique nature of their own. Further, because they come from other things, they don't have a nature of growing without their causes and conditions.
- **Emptiness** does exist by definition because it's not something that you just make up with your mind; every object has emptiness and emptiness has its own nature from its own side.

According to the Middle-Way School, dependent things like a pen don't exist by definition because when you eliminate the name and thought of a pen, which is forced on you by your past karma, there is no pen there. This is why a dog sees it as a chewable object. Nothing exists by definition according to the Middle-Way School. This means that your aging and death are only a projection and therefore they can be changed.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Two, continued

Classical Metaphors for the Three Attributes

ཡོངས་གྲུབ་ནམ་མཁའ་དང་འདྲ།

1. YONGDRUP NAMKA DANG DRA **Emptiness is just like empty space**, because
 emptiness empty space just like it is an absence of something (a physical
 obstruction). Emptiness is also an absence of
 something: a self-existent thing. Empty space means the place in which something is located
 which is free of having a physical obstruction. It's an example of an unchanging thing.
 There was a school in Tibet which believed that emptiness is a positive thing rather than an
 absence of a self-existent thing. Je Tsongkapa points out the error of this belief in his text.

ཀུན་བརྟགས་ནམ་མཁའ་མི་དོག་དང་འདྲ།

2. KUNTAK NAMKAY METOK DANG DRA **Constructs are just like a flower**
 construct in mid air flower just like **that grows in mid-air** because
 they are just imaginary things
 that are made up by your mind. The objects that constructs refer to can either exist (like the
 boy Tashi) or not exist (like a sky flower). In either case, the construct is still made up.

གཞན་དབང་སྐྱུ་མ་དང་འདྲ།

3. SHENWANG GYUMA DANG DRA **Dependent things are just like an illusion**,
 caused things illusion just like because in reality they are coming from the
 same karmic seed that your eye perceiving
 them is coming from, but they seem to be coming from a separate karmic seed. They are
 just like a movie because they trick you into thinking that they come from a different energy
 than your eye which perceives them. The pen seems to have come from a pen factory and
 your eye seems to have come from the biological causes of your body, but this is an illusion
 – the pen and my eye come from the same single karma.

MING DE SHAK **A name and a term.** A construct can be either a name or a term,
 name term **or both.**

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Three: Five Statements About Emptiness

Jonangba's View

A viewpoint proposed by Jonangba and his followers in Tibet held these two contradictory beliefs:

1. Lord Buddha was speaking literally when he spoke the third turning of the wheel.
2. Emptiness is a positive thing.

It is contradictory to believe these two views together, because in the third turning of the wheel Lord Buddha compared emptiness to empty space, meaning that it is the absence of something – in the case of this metaphor, the absence of an obstructing object. So emptiness cannot be a positive self-standing thing like a ball of white light, or the pure thoughts going on in your mind, or “the opposite of all that it is not,” because these are all positive things, and emptiness is really just the absence of a self-existent thing.

A Summary of the Three Turnings of the Wheel

In the first turning of the wheel, Lord Buddha said that things such as the four arya truths, the five heaps, etc., have a nature of their own and they exist by definition from their own side. Then in the second turning of the wheel, Lord Buddha said that nothing has any nature of its own. In the third turning of the wheel, Lord Buddha made fine distinctions.

ལེགས་པར་སྐྱེ་བའི་བེལ་འཁོར།

LEKPAR CHEWAY KILNKOR The turning of the wheel of fine distinctions. In the third fine distinctions wheel of turning of the wheel Lord Buddha made fine distinctions about what things exist by definition. He said three things:

1. Constructs, which are just imaginary things, *don't* exist by definition, they don't have a nature of their own, they don't come from their own side with their own unique way of being.
2. Dependent things *do* exist by definition from their own side, but they don't grow without their causes and conditions.
3. Emptiness *does* exist by definition from its own side. Here Lord Buddha said, “Nothing is ultimate,” which means that a) things don't have a nature of being self-existent and b) most things don't have a nature of being what you see when you see emptiness directly.

The Importance of Understanding Emptiness Correctly

You must study and struggle with the different views about emptiness held by the different schools of ancient India. These schools of thought represent views that we naturally hold today as we try to figure out the correct view of emptiness. One important test for which view is correct is your own logic and direct experience, which will lead to correct realizations about emptiness. The importance of understanding emptiness correctly intellectually is that it will lead you to perceiving emptiness directly which is the only energy in the universe that can remove your suffering forever and make you totally happy.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Three, continued

You must realize that: a self-existent thing doesn't exist, that mental constructs don't have any nature of their own, and that the changing things in your life come from causes and conditions. When you mistakenly think that imaginary things – like a self-existent screaming boss or a nasty friend or spouse – come from their own side you perpetuate the ignorance and bad karma that causes the suffering to continue in your life, and actually causes your aging and death. If you could realize that your image of these things is just a mental projection that comes from your past karma you could reverse all of these problems and actually eliminate your aging and death. But you must understand emptiness correctly and stop seeing things as self-existent.

The Five Statements

In the second turning of the wheel Lord Buddha made five radical statements. Firstly, he said, **nothing has any nature of its own**, and we clarified what he meant in the last class and above. Now we will identify and clarify the four remaining radical statements Lord Buddha made in the second turning of the wheel, according to the Mind-Only School.

མ་སྐྱེས་པ།

MA KYEPA **Nothing has a nature of growing or starting.** For example, the sun nothing grows doesn't come up in the morning. In the Middle-Way School this statement means nothing happens that is not caused by your mental projections forced on you by your past karma. The Mind-Only School says that the sun *does* come up from its own side, and when Lord Buddha said nothing has a nature of growing he meant three things:

- Constructs don't grow because they are not changing things.
- Emptiness doesn't grow because it is not a changing thing.
- Lord Buddha didn't mention dependent things here because they do grow, and they even grow by definition, not as merely a projection.

མ་འགྲོགས་པ།

MA GAKPA **Nothing has a nature of ending.** For example, you don't die. In the nothing stops Middle-Way School this statement means that nothing stops that is not a mental projection forced on you by your past karma. This means that it's possible to stop your own death because it's only a mental projection and it doesn't have any reality of its own. To the Mind-Only School this statement means:

- Construct don't end because they are just imaginary things.
- Emptiness doesn't wear out; it only goes out of existence, but it doesn't slowly fade out because it's an unchanging thing as long as it exists.
- Lord Buddha didn't mention changing things because they do end, and they end by definition, because their causes stop, and it's not just your projection.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Three, continued

What's the difference between saying, "the pen, my eyeball, and the eye consciousness that sees the pen come from the same karmic seed," and saying, "the pen is just a projection of my karma?" You must work on this question. One of these is the real meaning of emptiness and one is slightly incorrect.

གཞོན་མ་ནས་ཞི་བ།

SUMA NE SHIWA **Everything is peace, or extinction, from the beginning.**
beginningless peace, extinct This means free from the mentally afflicted side of things, which means mental afflictions, their causes and their results. The vast majority of your life is tied up with mentally afflicted things. The exceptions are your Dharma studies, renunciation, compassion, and an understanding of emptiness. With this statement, Lord Buddha meant:

- Constructs are free from the mentally afflicted side of things because they are unchanging.
- Emptiness also is peace from the beginning because it's unchanging.
- Lord Buddha didn't refer to changing things because generally they are suffering things.

རང་བཞིན་གྱིས་ཡོངས་སུ་སྤངས་ལས་འདས་པ།

RANGSHIN GYI YONG SU NYA-NGEN LE DEPA
its very nature by completely grief gone beyond

Everything is gone beyond grief. Grief is a code word for the suffering side of things. This one is very similar to the previous one. Lord Buddha meant:

- Constructs are free from suffering.
- Emptiness also is devoid of mentally afflicted stuff.
- Lord Buddha again skips changing things, because they are not gone beyond grief.

Master Asanga's Clarification

རང་གི་རྒྱ་རྒྱུ་མེད་ནས་མ་སྐྱེ་བ་དང་མ་འགག་པ།

RANGGI GYU KYEN ME NE MA KYEWA DANG MA GAKPA
its own main cooperative not if nothing grows and nothing stops
cause conditions

Nothing starts and nothing stops without their main causes and cooperative conditions. Je Tsongkapa quotes Master Asanga as saying that Lord Buddha *did* mean to apply the above "latter four" characteristics to dependent things: they don't stop, they don't end, they are peace from the beginning and they are gone beyond grief. Master Asanga meant that changing things don't start without their causes, and changing things don't stop without

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Three, continued

their causes. Also, they aren't mixed up with mentally afflicted things without their causes. So Master Asanga, posing as the spokesman for the Mind-Only School, says that Lord Buddha was implying that the latter four characteristics do apply to changing things, but only when you include their causes and conditions.

A Very Obtuse Statement from the Sutra

The sutra now says, "Emptiness doesn't grow and emptiness doesn't stop, because it continues in the time of changeless changelessness and up to the time of unshaking unshakeability." Je Tsongkapa explains these two phrases as meaning that the emptiness of the pen, for example, has existed as an unchanging thing since the pen began; and the emptiness of the pen will continue for as long as the pen exists.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Four: The Three Attributes

Three Qualities of Dependent Things

In the third turning of the wheel Lord Buddha explains, in the *Commentary of the True Intent of the Sutras*, that all of reality can be divided into the three attributes. These three attributes explain everything in the universe. They are very important and they relate in an interdependent way.

There are three qualities of dependent things that relate to constructs in three specific ways:

ནམ་པར་རྟོག་པའི་སྐྱོད་ཡུལ།

NAMPAR TOKPAY CHUYUL
mentally construct arena

Dependent things are the arena where you create your constructs. The Mind-Only School says that you never really see the pen itself. You almost never get beyond the curtain of your images. There is a real pen out there that exists by definition from its own side, but it is merely the playground where your mind invents its constructs.

ཀུན་བརྟགས་པའི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱི་གནས།

KUNTAKPAY TSENNYI KYI NE
imagined thing attribute of place

Dependent things are the place where the constructs stay. For example, the baby boy is the place where the construct “Tashi” stays.

- The constructing state of mind is represented by the mom and dad that name him “Tashi.”
- The dependent thing is the little blob of baby boy out there.
- The construct is “Tashi,” the name and the thought in the parents’ mind.

The evidence that the construct “Tashi” doesn’t exist by definition is that no one called him Tashi until the parents made their mental images and started to name him Tashi. The key point is that each of the three attributes depend on the other two; they stand like a tripod and support each other. Lord Buddha is defining changing things by showing how imaginary things relate to them. These are not just three random groups of things. They tie together and define each other in a beautiful way.

Ignorance is not realizing that the construct Tashi is only something that you made up. It is thinking that Tashi must be Tashi from the beginning from its own side. This self-existent Tashi is the *gakja* – the thing we deny that never could have existed in the first place.

འདུ་བྱེད་ཀྱི་མཚན་མ།

DU-JE KYI TSENMA
causal factor of characteristics

Dependent things exhibit the quality of making things happen. They are caused themselves and cause other things.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Four, continued

In summary, according to the third turning of the wheel, Lord Buddha said dependent things are:

1. Those things that you *imagine* as a changing thing, that you think about as being “pen.”
2. Those things that *get imagined* as a changing thing, that are thought about as being “pen.”
3. Those things that change, that function as a pen.

Why didn't Lord Buddha just define dependent things simply as those things that change? He expressed the relationship between changing things and constructs in this way, because **he's trying to force you to see that in reality changing things are actually just constructs of your mind.** You need to understand that the boy named Tashi wasn't Tashi from the very beginning, and the pen wasn't a pen from the very beginning – you are actually creating the thing called pen, and you have an idea called pen that's standing like a curtain between you and the pen; you get mixed up and mistake your idea of the pen for the real pen. There really is a pen out there and there is a boy out there, according to the Mind-Only School, but the construct Tashi is only an idea between you and the boy, and pen is only an idea between you and the pen that is out there. You're never really seeing a pen or Tashi; all you're ever really seeing is a baby that you're thinking of as Tashi. There is no Tashi that exists from his own side by definition.

The point is that when you encounter other people you tend to mistakenly think of them as if they existed by definition and are not just constructs of your imagination. Then you begin to think that they are good or bad from their own side by definition, rather than just being something that your mind is creating.

DA JANG GYI KYEBU The person who knows the name for the thing. If a word knower of person constructing state of mind is that which gives a certain name to an object and thinks about it in a certain way, then how can an infant experience their world through constructs? From his past life, an infant thinks about things in a certain way based on his karma from past lives. For example, to the baby Kieran, the name for everything is “Dah.” He doesn't speak names for things, but he does already think of things in certain ways through his constructs. You are thinking of a pen as a pen because of millions of years of past karma that makes you predisposed to see pen when you look at a pen. You're just returning to what you always knew in past lives. An animal has collected lousy karma and doesn't have that recent memory that would force it to recognize the cylinder as a pen, and it goes on thinking of it as a chewable object. In other words, nothing in your life is new. The reason Mozart could play piano beautifully from such a young age is that he was remembering what he already knew for millions of years.

You see all the objects in the world around you the way you do merely from the habit of millions of past lives. So to change the world around you, especially to move up to a higher tantric level, is a very big and difficult job, but it's much easier if you understand how you're making up the names for everything. This is the clue; this is the perfection of wisdom.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Four, continued

If you understand this lesson, you are eligible to move up to tantra. Right now you are restricted to everything you remember from your past lives, and you are perceiving or inventing your world on the basis of seeds that have been there for thousands and thousands of years. You're not inherently smarter than animals – you just have the habit for thousands of lifetimes of seeing this cylinder as a pen so that in this life you recognize it fairly quickly as being a pen. So to move up to seeing the world in a new way has to happen through the door called the perfection of wisdom, which is to understand how you are inventing pen. You have to understand the relationship between constructs, changing things, and emptiness. This is knowledge. Making that leap between what you knew from your past lives to what you are capable of being – a tantric deity – is accomplished through the perfection of wisdom. You have to know how you are creating your world around you.

But don't forget that according to the Mind-Only School, dependent things *do* exist from their own side, even though your constructs of the changing object are made up in your head. The changing things are believed to have some existence from their own side, to exist by definition. We believe this naturally, and the reason we're studying Mind-Only view is that we're trying to overcome our instinctive belief that the objects in the world around us exist from their own side.

According to Mind-Only School, a tantric angel is a tantric angel from their own side, and a normal person is a normal person from their own side, because they are changing things that exist by definition and have characteristics that aren't just your mental projection. According to Middle-Way view, a person's nature is nothing but a mental projection, so if you collect the right karma all of the things in the world around you can become holy.

Two Types of Constructs

There are two ways that you create mental images or form constructs about things:

ངོ་བོ་ལ་གུན་བརྟགས་པའི་གུན་བརྟགས།

NGOWO LA KUNTAKPAY KUNTAK
its essence about to construct a construct

A construct you construct about the essence of a thing. For example, "pen" or "car." It is a verbalization and/or a conceptualization.

ཁྱད་པར་ལ་གུན་བརྟགས་པའི་གུན་བརྟགས།

KYEPAR LA KUNTAKPAY KUNTAK
its features about to construct a construct

A construct you construct about the features about a thing. For example, "blue," "long," or "sharp" relative to a pen, or the "chubbiness" of the baby boy.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Four, continued

So you can construct a construct relative to the basic nature of an object (“pen”) or relative to the specific features or characteristics of an object (“long and blue”). These are correct non-mistaken constructs.

A third kind of construct is mistaken: to think that the pen is what we call “pen” from its own side. This kind of construct is ignorance itself according to the Mind-Only School – the fact that it is “pen” by definition, from its own side, not merely as a nominal thing – which doesn’t exist at all. A pen is not the thing you call “pen,” from its own side. Emptiness is the fact that there doesn’t exist anywhere in the universe a pen that could be called “pen” from its own side.

So the two correct types of concepts are: 1) a concept about an essence or basic identity, like the category “pen”, and 2) a concept about features or details about the pen, like “blue”. There are also ignorant constructs like seeing the pen as existing from its own side.

The Interdependence of the Three Attributes

Each one of the three attributes supports the existence of the other two. They are like a tripod or three corners of a triangle. Lord Buddha doesn’t just describe dependent things in isolation as things that change or things that are caused. He describes them in terms of their relation to constructs, as explained above. Dependent things are the basis of constructs, and they are mainly suffering and the cause of suffering. The three attributes are:

Shenwang

dependent thing

Kuntak

construct

Yongdrup

emptiness

Emptiness (Yongdrup) = **Dependent Thing** (Shenwang’s) - **Constructs** (Kuntaks)

The Emptiness of a changing thing is the absence of a construct about it that exists from its own side.

To think “my boss is angry” is a correct construct, but to think “my angry boss must be an angry boss because he is so from his own side” is an incorrect construct, because this construct only exists nominally as something that the mind focuses on. “Dandruff that is bad from its own side” is an incorrect construct because it leads you to emphasize on shopping for cosmetics and to ignore the monks at Sera monastery in India who need food. Dandruff does exist, but dandruff that is bad by definition doesn’t exist. When you think that things are self-existent, you commit bad karma by hurting someone to get the things you want or avoid the things you don’t want, and your suffering continues.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Four, continued

In the Middle-Way School all of these phrases are the same, but the Mind-Only School makes some distinctions between these phrases (for example, some things exist by definition but are not self-existent):

- exists naturally
- exists from its own side
- exists by definition
- exists truly
- exists self-existent

Existence versus Identity

When you think of a pen as being a pen naturally (which is incorrect), are you thinking of something as being there which is not there (thinking about whether or not it *exists* at all), or are you thinking of something in a way in which it is not (thinking about what its *identity* is). In English the verb *to be* is used to describe both existence and identity, but in Tibetan two different words are used.

མེད། ཡོད།

ME YU
is not it is

It is not and it is. For example, there is a table in the hallway, or there isn't a table in the hallway. You could say, there doesn't *exist* a table in the hallway.

མིན། ཡིན།

MIN YIN
is not it is

It is not and it is. For example, that speckled rope is not a snake. There certainly does exist something there, but what is its *identity*? Is it a rope or is it a snake?

When you are mistakenly focusing on the kind of constructs that don't exist – constructs that exist from their own side that are not just imaginary things – you are mainly mis-identifying the nature of the construct. The construct you are focusing on does *exist*, but its *identity* is that of not existing by definition and merely being an invention of your imagination. The fact that a pen is what we call pen is something that exists, but is not something that has the identity of existing by definition. Your construct that focuses on the essence, "this is a pen," does exist; your construct that focuses on the features, "this is a blue pen," also exists; but your construct that focuses on a pen that is what we call pen from its own side is something that doesn't exist. Consider the two phrases:

1. The fact that the pen is what we call pen from its own side doesn't *exist*.
2. The fact that the pen doesn't have an *identity* of having a construct related to it that exists by definition.

The second way of looking at the emptiness of the pen is more important because we are not disputing the *existence* of the construct called "the fact that this pen is what we call pen;" we are disputing that the *identity* of the construct "the fact that this pen is what we call pen" exists by definition from its own side.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Four, continued

Until you graduate to Middle-Way thinking, seeing your own body and mind as a construct, you can never become a Buddha. Tantra will not work for you if you only get as far as Mind-Only thinking, because you still believe that your body and mind exist by definition from their own side. This would mean that you have to get old and die because aging and death would not be just projections.

The Three Attributes in the First Turning of the Wheel

Lord Buddha up to this point has been talking about physical matter which is the first heap. In the sutra, he now says that this same relationship between the three attributes can be established with regard to all of the other things he taught in the first turning of the wheel. **Every one of these things has their own dependent thing, construct, and emptiness:**

- The remaining five heaps
- The four arya truths
- The twelve doors of sense
- The eighteen divisions of the universe
- The six elements

The point of all of this analysis is to realize that all of the problems in your life are coming from your own constructs which you hold to be existing from their own side. Because of this wrong view you react against them and collect bad karma which causes all of your suffering. According to tantra, every time that you have a single thought of a single object as existing from its own side you have damaged your winds and your body, and moved closer to death. The thought that things are self-existent is killing you literally. To the Middle-Way School, **ignorance itself is a mental affliction – just misunderstanding your world, even if you didn't get upset at anyone, is enough to kill you.** As the mind goes so goes the physical constituents. The point of Buddhism is to stop this ignorance of seeing things as self-existent and to use this wisdom to stop your own death and to help others to do the same. It takes almost as much good karma to see someone reach tantric enlightenment as to do it yourself, so don't be surprised if you're not seeing it happen at this point in your practice.

The name for *kye-rim* visualizations is *dakpay nelnjor* – *nelnjor* means yoga and *dakpay* means *kuntak* which means imaginary. The karma of having certain attitudes about a holy being is what makes them happen. This is as much detail as is appropriate in a public teaching.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Five: The Three Turnings of the Wheel

གྲུབ་དོན།

DRUP **DUN**
to accomplish the meaning

The Outcome of the Exchange Between the
Bodhisattva and the Buddha

The outcome is something like a business deal. They haggle a bit, and then come up with an agreement. The Bodhisattva says, "Aha, I learned something." The outcome is very important in *trangne*. Here, the Buddha says the first turning and the second turning were not literal. He gives the third turning, that nothing exists by definition. Here, "by definition" means from its own side with its own unique way of being. In the Mind-Only school the third turning of the wheel is literal, and should be taken at face value. In the Middle Way school, any teaching which primarily addresses emptiness is literal, and any teaching which does not is figurative, and was taught to bring the disciple closer to the correct view. In Middle Way, a teaching taught at "face value" may be taken as the wording says.

Four Expressions that Describe the First and Second Turnings of the Wheel

The *Sutra on the True Intent* makes four statements that characterize the first and second turnings of the wheel. These statements all boil down to the fact that the first and second turnings are only meant figuratively and are not the highest truth. The third turning, by contrast, was spoken literally and is the highest truth, according to the Mind-Only School.

1. **They have something higher.** There is some higher truth (the third turning of the wheel).
2. **They leave an opening** for dispute.
3. **They have to be interpreted further.** They are not meant to be taken literally.
4. **They serve as a basis of contention.** Someone will fight about it.

The text then says that the third turning of the wheel is the opposite of these four characteristics: it has nothing higher, it doesn't leave an opening for dispute, it doesn't need to be interpreted further, and it doesn't present a basis of contention for someone who is thinking correctly.

ཚུལ་འཁོར།

CHUN KOR
Dharma wheel

Wheel of the Dharma. This is a separate subject in itself. For each of the three turnings of the wheel we will identify its name, time period, place taught, disciples, main subject matter, viewpoint expressed. For each turning of the wheel, generally speaking, there was a huge convocation taught to a particular audience, in a particular locale, with a particular viewpoint expressed.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Five, continued

The First Turning of the Wheel of Dharma

བདེན་བཞིའི་ཚོས་འཁོར།

Name: DEN SHIY CHUN KOR **Turning of the wheel on the four arya truths.**
truth four Dharma wheel

Period: Taught primarily during the early part of Lord Buddha’s teaching on this planet.

ལྷ་ར་རྒྱ་སི

Place: WARANASI **Varanasi.** The general area in Bengal, India where the town Sarnath, or Deer Park, is located.
Varanasi

ཉན་ཐོས་ཐེག་པ།

Disciples: NYENTU TEKPA **Listeners.** Students of the hinayana school. This refers to people who think with the philosophically immature viewpoint that things are self-existent. This viewpoint corresponds to the two lower schools of ancient India: *Abhidharma* and *Sutrist*.
Listeners vehicle

འཕགས་པའི་བདེན་པ་བཞི།

Subject: PAYKPAY DENPA SHI **Four arya truths.** Lord Buddha taught this lesson originally to his first five disciples.
arya truths four

ཚོས་རྣམས་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པ།

Viewpoint: CHU NAM RANG GI TSEN NYI KYI DRUPPA
Dharma plural nature of definition by exists

Everything has a nature of existing by definition. Everything has its own identity from its own side.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Five, continued

The Second Turning of the Wheel of Dharma

མཚན་ཉིད་མེད་པའི་ཚེས་འཁོར།

Name: TSEN NYI MEPAY CHUN KOR Turning of the wheel on how
definition nothing Dharma wheel nothing exists by definition.

Period: Taught primarily during the middle part of Lord Buddha’s teaching on this planet.

བྱ་གོད་ལུང་པའི་རི།

Place: JAGU PUNGPOY RI Vulture’s peak. This area of Bengal still exists and
vulture shaped like peak is now called Rajighira.

ཐེག་ཆེན།

Disciples: TEK CHEN Greater way (*mahayana*) practitioners. (Mind-Only also
vehicle greater says for Mind-Only practitioners, because they know it is
figurative.)

སྟོང་པ་ཉིད།

Subject: TONGPA NYI Emptiness. Emptiness is the fact that nothing has a nature
emptiness existing from its own side.

ཚེས་རྣམས་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་མ་གྲུབ་པ།

Viewpoint: CHU NAM RANG GI TSEN NYI KYI MA DRUPPA
Dharma plural nature of definition by nothing exists

No existing thing has a nature of existing by definition.

The Third Turning of the Wheel of Dharma

ལེགས་སྤྱིའི་ཚེས་འཁོར།

Name: LEKCHEY CHUN KOR Turning of the wheel of fine distinctions.
fine distinction Dharma wheel

Period: Taught primarily during the latter part of Lord Buddha’s teaching on this planet.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Five, continued

ཡངས་པ་ཅན།

Place: YANGPACHEN
great convocation

Vaishali.

ཐེག་པ་ཐམས་ཅད།

Disciples: TEKPA TAMCHE
vehicle all of them

People of all ways, hinayana and mahayana.

མཚན་ཉིད་གསུམ།

Subject: TSENNYI SUM
attributes three

The three attributes.

ཚོས་རྣམས་ལ་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་མ་གྲུབ་ལེགས་པར་བྱ།

Viewpoint: CHU NAM LA RANG GI TSENNYI KYI DRUP MADRUP LEKPAR CHE
All existing plural nature of definition by exists doesn't exist fine distinctions
objects

We must make fine distinctions about all existing objects which either do or don't have a nature of existing by definition.

Turning the Wheel of Dharma

འཁོར་ལོས་བསྐྱར་བའི་རྒྱལ་པོའི་འཁོར་ལོ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།

KORLU GYURWAY GYALPOY KORLO RINPOCHE Precious wheel owned by the
wheel gets his power king wheel precious wheel-empowered emperor.

This idea comes mainly from the Abhidharma School and from the perfection of wisdom, but it is accepted by all of the schools. A *Chakravartan* (he who rules by the wheel) is an emperor who get his or her power from the wheel. These rulers can control the entire universe through their gold or silver wheel. They are close to enlightenment and have some but not all of the marks of a Buddha. The most powerful *Charkravartan*'s are begged by the people to be the ruler, and less powerful ones have to fight to maintain their power.

The precious wheel is a spaceship or flying disk with a diameter of 2,000 miles and can travel half a million miles a day. Its function is to carry the emperor and his four forces

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Five, continued

all over his empire in order to conquer unconquered spiritual territory. The Dharma wheel enables you to achieve spiritual realizations and goals, especially the path of seeing. After you see emptiness directly you can understand the entire contents of all Buddhist scriptures immediately. It is also said that the eight spokes of a wheel represent the eight fold path of an arya. The two deer represent Deer Park where Lord Buddha first turned the wheel of Dharma. Turning the wheel of Dharma can occur at two different levels.

ལུང་གི་ཚོས་འཁོར།

LUNG GI CHUN KOR
speech of Dharma wheel

Speech. The physical Dharma in the form of lectures, books, CDs, woodblock prints, etc.

ཏོགས་པའི་ཚོས་འཁོར།

TOKPAY CHUN KOR
realizations Dharma wheel

Spiritual realizations where your mind undergoes a permanent change.

Dharma in the form of spiritual realizations will die out first, where there are still books in the libraries and on the computers which no one understands any more.

Spiritual realizations are triggered by the speech of a teacher that catches a student's heart. The student is then able to go and speak the Dharma to a new student, who in turn reaches realizations, and it moves on and on from student to student through this perpetuating process of teachers speaking and offering spiritual realizations to students who themselves become teachers.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Six: Defining the Three Turnings of the Wheel

What Is Included in the First Turning of the Wheel?

The reading for this week comes from the monastic textbook on the Mind-Only School and the third turning of the wheel. It addresses the question of how the three turnings of the wheel are defined. Is it according to historical period, content taught, order of import or accuracy, some, or all of the above?

ལྔ་སྡེ་ལ་ཤམ་ཐབས་ལྷུ་མ་པོར་བགོ་བར་བྱའོ། །ཞེས།

NGA DE LA SHAMTAP DUMPOR GOWAR JAO, SHE
five group monk's robe circular, neatly you should wear spoke thus

Lord Buddha spoke to the group of five disciples that you should wear your robes neatly.

This quote is from the *Sutra of the Tigress*, part of the *Golden Light Sutra* which we studied in the first year of classes. Lord Buddha gave his life to a tigress and her cubs who then become his disciples later. Lord Buddha is describing to his first disciples, shortly after his very first teaching which covered the four arya truths, that they should wear their robes neatly in order to attract others to the Dharma. This teaching is not considered by the Mind-Only School to be part of the first turning of the wheel because it's not related to the bodhisattva's question about whether or not certain kinds of things exist by definition.

The Middle Way's Ordering of the Three Turnings

གཟུངས་རྒྱལ་གྱི་མདོ།

SUNG GYAL GYI DO Sutra Requested by the King of Mystic Words. This
mantra king of sutra sutra says that the order of the three turnings of the
wheel should be according to profundity or correctness,
as follows:

བདེན་བཞིའི་ཚོས་འཁོར།

DEN SHI CHUNKOR Turning of the wheel on the four arya truths.
truth four turning of wheel The Mind-Only School agrees that this should be
first.

ལེགས་པར་སྤྱེ་བའི་ཚོས་འཁོར།

LEKPAR CHEWAY CHUNKOR Turning of the wheel of fine distinctions
fine distinctions turning of wheel is second.

མཚན་ཉིད་མེད་པའི་ཚོས་འཁོར།

TSENNYI MEPAY CHUNKOR Turning of the wheel of nothing exists by
by definition not exist turning of wheel definition is third.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Six, continued

The *Sutra of the King of Mystic Words* says that the turning of the wheel that explains that nothing exists by definition should be last, because then the three turnings are ordered according to increasing correctness. This is the Middle-Way view.

The Three Turnings of the Wheel Defined by Disciple

Kedrup Denpa Dargye from Sera Mey monastery presents a clarification of the disciples for whom each of the three turnings of the wheel were presented.

1. The **first turning** of the wheel is defined as “that turning designed for students who could understand that the three attributes applied to the emptiness of a *person*, as that is adjusted in a version that lesser capacity students could understand.” Anyone who could grasp the simple understanding of emptiness of persons are disciples of the first turning.
2. The **second turning** of the wheel is defined as “that turning designed for disciples of the greater way who can understand the emptiness of *objects* presented in the second turning of the wheel without hearing the outcome of the exchange presented in the third turning of the wheel.
3. The **third turning** of the wheel is defined as “that turning designed for disciples of the greater way who can’t understand the emptiness of objects presented in the second turning of the wheel until they hear the outcome of the exchange presented in the third turning of the wheel about how constructs don’t exist by definition, and dependent things and emptiness do exist by definition.

So when we say that the third turning of the wheel was designed by students who have entered all three ways, it means that they have grasped both the lower way (*hinayana*) and greater way (*mahayana*).

What Is Included in the Third Turning of the Wheel?

Only those teachings where Lord Buddha clearly taught about emptiness are defined as the **second turning of the wheel**, in terms of the outcome of the exchange. The third turning of the wheel is defined, in terms of the outcome of the exchange, as those teachings where Lord Buddha makes fine distinctions about whether or not certain things exist by definition; so not everything that Lord Buddha taught in the latter period of his life qualifies as the third turning of the wheel.

འདུལ་བ་མདོར་བསྐྱུས་རུང་མཐུན་དུ་བྲགས་པ།

DULWA DORDU RUNGTON DU DRAKPA
vowed abbreviation acceptable to do Buddha stated
morality

Lord Buddha stated in the
*Abbreviation on Vowed
Morality* what is okay to do.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Six, continued

Just before leaving this planet, Lord Buddha gave a summary presentation of vowed morality. He described those activities that you are required to do, those activities that you are not supposed to do, and those activities that are acceptable to do but are not required. Lord Buddha then said, "Take these principles and apply them to the culture and country in which you live."

Note that the accepted Middle-Way view is that the third turning of the wheel is not literal because Lord Buddha didn't clearly explain emptiness, although he did talk about how certain things exist by definition or not. In class we study and accept the Middle-Way viewpoint, but at work we are instinctively Mind-Only because we think that the angry boss is coming from his own side and is not just a projection of our past karma.

Three Goals of the Third Turning of the Wheel

Lord Buddha had three goals in mind when he taught the third turning of the wheel.

1. He wanted us to learn to **not take literally** his two blanket statements: that everything exists by definition in the first turning, and that nothing exists by definition in the second turning.
2. He wanted us to **understand the nature of the three attributes**: constructs don't exist by definition but dependent things and emptiness do exist by definition. Note that all schools of Buddhism accept the three attributes, but each school would interpret them differently.
3. He wanted to give us a **really good way of understanding emptiness**, as the fact that a construct about a dependent thing doesn't exist by definition. It is the fact that separate karmic seeds are not producing a person who irritates me and my mind that is irritated. The emptiness of the irritating person is the fact that my mental image of her doesn't exist by definition.

Buddha Nature

དེ་བཞིན་གཤམ་པའི་སྣང་པོ།

DESHIN SHEKPAY NYINGPO
like that gone thus essence

Essence of those gone thus, or Buddha nature.

For the sake of some non-Buddhists, Lord Buddha once taught that people do have a self-nature, and

he called it your Buddha nature. Then in Tibet some people (certain followers of Jonangba) latched onto the belief that all three turnings of the wheel were to be taken literally and that when Lord Buddha said in the first turning of the wheel that you have a Buddha nature he meant that you have a little Buddha inside of you that will be revealed if you just peel

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Six, continued

away the covering. This idea is totally wrong and it isn't what Buddha nature means. There is no little buddha inside of you, but you do have a **Buddha nature** and it is **the emptiness of your mind**. Because your mind is empty you have the capacity or potential to become a Buddha. If you collect enough good karma you will be forced to see your mind as totally pure. Aryas and Arhats are not self-existent realized beings; their minds are blank and they have just collected the karma to see themselves as special beings. The emptiness of your mind is the only enlightened thing about you right now. There is no positive thing inside you that is hiding behind a veil. Your nature right now is mentally afflicted and you misperceive everything around you every second of the day; but this state is changeable because your mind is empty. When you become a Buddha, the emptiness of your mind is the *only* thing that you have today that will still be with you. *Tatagata* is the Sanskrit word, which means "ones gone thus," and refers to Buddhas.

A Clear Definition of the First Turning of the Wheel

འཁོར་ལོ་གསུམ་པོ་གང་རུང་དུ་གྱུར་པའི་ཐོག་དམན་གྱི་མདོ།

KORLO SUMPO GANG RUNG DU GYURPAY TEK MEN GYI DO
turning of all 3 which belongs to any one lower way of sutra
the wheel

A sutra of the lower way that belongs to any one of the three turnings [historical periods] **of the wheel**. This is the ultimate definition of the first turning of the wheel, offered by Kedrup Tenpa Dargye. We can accept this definition as the best one. "Lower way" refers to a sutra that expresses simplified version of emptiness intended for those of lesser capacity – it doesn't refer to Theraveda practitioners who may have an excellent understanding of emptiness.

The **second turning of the wheel** is then considered to be "any sutra taught for those greater way disciples who could understand emptiness without having to hear the explanations given in the *Sutra on the True Intent*."

And the **third turning of the wheel** is considered to be "any sutra taught for those greater way disciples who needed to hear the explanations given in the *Sutra on the True Intent* in order to understand emptiness correctly." In the third turning Lord Buddha is repackaging emptiness for those who couldn't understand what he meant when he taught the second turning of the wheel.

The beauty of this point is that Kedrup Tenpa Dargye is repackaging the message to suit the particular audience, and as teachers you will have to do this also. Americans have heard ridiculous explanations of emptiness and you will have to retrain them. You have to judge the level of your audience to the best of your ability and suit the message to their capacity. You must immediately link karma and morality to your explanation of emptiness. The relationship between emptiness and your projections forced on you by your morality must be linked in your explanations.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Seven: The Two Extremes

We have finished directly studying the *Sutra on the True Intent*, in which the Buddha explained the meaning of his other sutras, and are now moving on to the commentaries from ancient India written over a thousand years of time in which the great pandits explained the meaning of the sutra.

འཕགས་པ་ཐོགས་མེད།

PAKPA TOKME
Arya Asanga

Arya Asanga. He went to Maitreya's paradise and was taking dictation from Maitreya to record these books. If your karma was good enough, Maitreya would be sitting in this class and you would just ask if you could copy his notes. The five great books of Maitreya form much of the curriculum of a Tibetan monastery. Two of them are written from the Middle-Way point of view and three of them are written by the Mind-Only point of view. Even the two Middle-Way books use the *Sutra on the True Intent*. Master Asanga has been called the one of the two great innovators who began the Mind-Only School, but it was really Lord Buddha who first taught the Mind-Only School. Arya Asanga re-awakened interest in the *Sutra on the True Intent*, and he reported the views of the Mind-Only School, but actually believed the view of the Middle-Way School. By understanding the Mind-Only School's subtle errors, you will be better equipped to teach others.

DE KONA NYI Arya Asanga describes thusness as being that thing which is free or devoid of two extremes which are false.

མཐའ།

TA
edge

Edge. It means an extreme in the sense of the edge of a cliff which if you wander too close to it you will fall off. If you get too close to this viewpoint you will fall into hell.

མཐའ་འཛིན།

TARN DZIN
extreme to hold

To hold to an extreme view – believing in a dangerous wrong view. It's important to see that the extreme idea to which this state of mind holds doesn't even exist. It's like a purple two-headed elephant in this classroom which could never exist. The extreme is a thing that doesn't exist and never could exist but the state of mind that holds to it could exist. All of your suffering comes from believing in something that could never even exist. You're not just misunderstanding something – you're believing in something that never did exist in the first place.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Seven, continued

The Two Extremes

སྒྲོ་འདོགས།

1. DRON DOK **To concoct things.** This means to see something as being there which never existed at all and never could exist. It means to make up or fabricate something where nothing exists. Literally, *dro* means a feather, like a bird's feather, and *dok* means to apply, so *dron dok* means to attach or apply a feather to a bamboo shoot and make an arrow when there was no arrow previously.

བསྐྱར་འདོགས།

2. KURN DEP **To discount things.** This means to say that something doesn't exist when it really does exist. It's like saying someone really isn't an arya or a bodhisattva when they really are.

Concocting According to the Middle-Way School

In the Mind-Only School, changing objects exist by definition from their own side – a pen is a pen no matter who is looking at it. According to the Middle-Way, a pen has an identity of being a pen, but it comes from your own projection, which depends on your karma. So to the Middle-Way when you think there is a pen that is coming from its own side and not from your karmic projection, you are concocting (*dron dok*) something that doesn't really exist. Your mental image of the pen which comes from your karma does exist, but the pen that has its own identity from its own side doesn't exist. You are grasping to something that doesn't exist; you are making up something that really isn't there. This is holding a wrong view (*tarn dzin*). Concocting things means to think that your angry boss, taxes, bad weather, your job and your health are coming from their own side. Your mind and thoughts, your body, everything in your environment, and even physical laws like gravity itself come from your projections which are forced on you by your karma.

The concocting state of mind is focused upon the *gakja* – an imagined self-existent thing that never could have existed in the first place.

Discounting According to the Middle-Way School

Discounting (*kurn dep*) according to the Middle-Way School means to deny the laws of karma and its consequences because you heard that everything is empty and is just a projection so you can do whatever you want – if things are empty then nothing matters and I can do anything bad that I want to and not experience any harmful results.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Seven, continued

The Two Extremes According to the Middle-Way School

ཡུད་ན་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྱིས་གྲུབ་དགོས།

YU NA RANGGI TSENNYI KYI DRUP GU If something exists, it must exist if self-nature definition by exist it should **exist by definition**, the way it appears to me now. This is concocting something that doesn't really exist – a thing that exists from its own side. When you believe this, you react to bad things with anger or retribution, and by doing so you perpetuate these negative things in your life.

རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྱིས་མ་གྲུབ་ན་མེད་དགོས།

RANGGI TSENNYI KYI MA DRUP NA ME GU If something doesn't exist by self-nature definition by not exist if it shouldn't **definition, then it doesn't exist at all.** This viewpoint mainly applies to the laws of karma, which is the ultimate misunderstanding of emptiness – if it's an illusion it doesn't matter. Actually, because karma and its consequences are an illusion you must obey the laws of karma. It means that your hand is empty and it could become a dog's paw to you in five minutes. Nihilism is a pretty good translation here for discounting things.

The two extremes are sometimes called "things exist" and "things don't exist," which means that they are so by definition. They are also sometimes called "everything is unchanging" (because things come from their own side) and "everything has stopped" (because they don't exist at all).

The Two Extremes According to the Mind-Only School

The Mind-Only School believes that an object *does* come from its own side with its own unique way of being with its own identity. If you had a mental affliction today you must have held to this belief – you can't call yourself a real Middle-Way person if you had a mental affliction today.

ཀུན་བརྟགས་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྱིས་ཡོད་པར་འཛིན་པ།

1. KUNTAK RANGGI TSENNYI KYI YUPAR DZINPA
constructs self-nature definition by exist holding

Believing that constructs could have a nature of existing by definition. Certain constructs do exist, like "this is a pen," or "this pen is blue," or "the fact that Robyn is called Robyn," but these constructs don't exist by definition from their own side. This point would be

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Seven, continued

accepted by the Middle-Way School and flirting with it can serve to throw you up into Middle-Way. Thinking that “pen” could exist by definition is concocting something that doesn’t exist. This wrong view is the basis of prejudice and intolerance because you think that your opinion of things is the way that they really do exist. Your ignorant state of mind is the culprit here. This is thinking that the word “bad” applies from its own side to a situation that you are in. By thinking in this way you perpetuate all of your problems. The Middle-Way School would also say that constructs don’t exist by definition, but when they say this, they mean something slightly different.

གཞན་དབང་ཡོངས་གྲུབ་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་མ་གྲུབ་པ།

2. SHENWANG YONGDRUP RANGGI TSENNYI KYI MA DRUPPA
dependent thing emptiness self-nature definition by don’t exist

Dependent things and emptiness don’t have a nature of existing by definition. Because changing things come from a sequence of causes and conditions, they must exist from their own side. Likewise, emptiness is not just a fabrication of your mind; it really exists by definition from its own side. So discounting things means to say that dependent things and emptiness don’t come from their own side. Thinking that my mind and the pen that it sees are coming from different karmic seeds is what ignorance believes.

The Mind-Only School tries to say that because Middle-Way people don’t believe that an object exists by definition, they are saying that it doesn’t exist at all. So they accuse the Middle-Way School of being nihilistic.

Concocting According to the Mind-Only School

To the Mind-Only School, concocting means to think that mental constructs exist from their own side. The Middle-Way School also says that constructs don’t exist by definition. The reason that you suffer is that you think that constructs do exist by definition all day long. You think that a person or situation is bad from their own side and you react in such a way that you create more of the same kind of problems, and this is the meaning of samsara, or the vicious circle of suffering.

In the Mind-Only School, the pen’s emptiness is the fact that it doesn’t have a god-given right to be called a pen, meaning that the construct that is applied to it doesn’t exist from its own side; it is just an arbitrary way of looking at the pen which comes from your karma.

The Mind-Only School says that the mind of ignorance concocts constructs that it takes to exist by definition. This ignorant state of mind looks at a pen and thinks it should be called “pen” from its own side. It looks at a pen and thinks that pen wasn’t created by the same karma that is making me perceive it as a pen right now. The Middle-Way School agrees with this point, but they don’t say that it is the ultimate meaning of emptiness.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Seven, continued

Discounting According to the Mind-Only School

To the Mind-Only School, the extreme of discounting is to think that dependent things and emptiness don't exist by definition. They define dependent things as those things that are at the mercy of other things – if the causes don't show up, the dependent thing can't exist. They try to say that the Middle-Way School believes that nothing exists, because they say that dependent things and emptiness don't exist by definition. The Mind-Only school says, "If you Middle-Way people think that everything is a projection and that the pen doesn't exist from its own side, then what are you projecting onto? What is it that you are calling pen? If there's no pen there, then toward what can you make your projection? You guys must not believe in cause and effect because you think that nothing exists." This is how the Mind-Only School tries to convince Middle-Way people that they are discounting things that actually do exist: dependent things and emptiness which exist by definition. The Middle-Way School would respond, "We never said the pen doesn't exist. We only said that it doesn't exist by definition."

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Eight: Important Clarifications of the Mind-Only School

What It Means to Exist Ultimately

ཅེས་ཚེ་དང་ལྷན་པ

TSE DANG DENPA “Oh, venerable sir...” The Mind-Only School sarcastically challenges the Middle-Way School by saying, “Oh venerable sirs, if a dependent thing doesn’t exist by definition, would you please be so kind as to tell me how it *does* exist?” The Middle-Way School responds that it is merely a projection, as a mental construct is merely a projection. The Mind-Only School counters, “Pray tell, if dependent things don’t exist then what are you projecting onto?” Middle-Way School responds, “We didn’t say it didn’t exist; we just said it didn’t exist *by definition*.”

དོན་དམ་མ་དུ་མེད་ཀྱང་། བྱ་ཉན་དུ་ཡོད།

DUNDAM DU ME KYANG TA-NYE DU YU Things don’t exist ultimately, ultimately exist doesn’t but... nominally it exists **but they do exist nominally.**

Things don’t exist from their own side, but they *do* exist nominally through your impressions which are imprinted on your mind through your past deeds. When you remove your projection and try to find the object, you don’t find anything. If you don’t think of the cylinder as a pen, there is no pen there. So to the Middle-Way School “ultimately” means “independent of your projections.” The *Diamond Cutter Sutra* says that arhats, who have reached nirvana, haven’t removed their mental afflictions ultimately – but when they focus on their own mind they are forced to see it as having no mental afflictions due to their past good karma. This is the only way you can reach nirvana.

Ultimate Reality According to the Middle-Way School

The Middle-Way School says that nothing exists ultimately, but that doesn’t mean that ultimate reality doesn’t exist. In fact, ultimate reality is the fact that an object doesn’t exist ultimately, independent of your projections, which is its emptiness. Every existing object has its own ultimate reality.

དོན་དམ་བདེན་པ།

DUNDAM DENPA **Ultimate reality.** Ultimate reality is synonymous with emptiness ultimate truth – the fact that nothing has any nature of its own, according to the Middle-Way School.

དོན་དམ་པར། དོན་དམ་དུ།

DUNDAMPAR or DUNDAMDU To exist **ultimately**. Nothing exists ultimately according to the Middle-Way School. Even ultimate

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Eight, continued

reality or emptiness itself doesn't exist ultimately. If emptiness existed ultimately, then you could perceive it independent of your karmic projections, which is not the case.

ཚེས་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀྱི་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པ་ནི་དོན་དམ་བདེན་པ་ཡིན།

CHU TAMCHE KYI NGOWO NYI MEPA NI DUNDAM DENPA YIN
existing all of nature of their own don't if ultimate reality it is
object have

Ultimate reality is the fact that nothing has any nature of its own. According to the Middle Way, a pen doesn't have any nature of being a pen from its own side, independent of your karmic projections. When you look closer, it doesn't even have a nature of being a cylinder on its own, and as you look closer and closer you will find that it doesn't have any nature at all from its own side. Everything is just your perception onto a blank screen. When you look for the thing that gets the name you'll never find anything (*ta-nye takpay takdun tselway tse-ne mepay chir*). The immediate implication is that you had better straighten out your karma because everything is empty and therefore everything in your world is just a projection. This world view will lead to a community of enlightened beings living together happily.

Deceptive Reality According to the Middle-Way School

ཀུན་ཚོ་བ་བདེན་པ།

KUNDZOB DENPA Deceptive reality. Deceptive truth, is a poor translation because deceptive reality it is not truth; it is fake, it is a lie, it is deceiving you. It also shouldn't be translated as relative truth. You can call it nominal reality (*tanye du yupa*). "Deceptive" is *samvrti* in Sanskrit. There is a state of mind which is deceived because it thinks that the pen is coming from its own side. Everything that exists in the universe is either ultimate reality or deceptive reality. However, Buddhas don't get faked out by deceptive reality, so a more complete definition is "that reality which deceives a deceived state of mind." It is the reality that fakes out a deceived state of mind. It is the mind that is deceived, not the reality that is deceptive. Deceptive reality only exists with reference to a deceived state of mind. It is the fact that things are not the way that they appear that makes it deceptive.

The implication is that the annoying person at work who seems to a deceived state of mind to be coming from their own side, is actually just your karmic projection. When, based on this deceived state of mind, you react with anger or some other unethical deed, you perpetuate this kind of annoying person. The only way to remove the problems in your life is to remove your projections by changing your karma, not by changing the external things self-existently. For example, if you want your wife to stop lying to you, you have to stop lying to other people. The irony is that the natural reaction to a negative thing in your life is exactly what maintains these negative things.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Eight, continued

If you react with wisdom for long enough you will be forced to see yourself as a tantric deity living in Vajrayogini's paradise. Buddhas know the things they are seeing are illusions in a way, only karmic projections, and they happily maintain them.

Do Buddha's perceive suffering? The standard answer is that they perceive you perceiving suffering, but they don't suffer themselves because they don't have the karma to suffer. They are sweetly sad in a compassionate kind of way that feels good to them.

If you strip away the mental construct of the pen, the dependent thing that exists out there and is not your mental construct is still something that your karma is creating.

Deceptive and Ultimate Reality According to the Mind-Only School

The Mind-Only School would say that mental constructs are deceptive reality, because they are just made up in your mind and don't really exist from their own side; whereas dependent things and emptiness are ultimate reality because they aren't just made up in your mind. **If something exists by definition it is ultimate reality, and if something doesn't exist by definition it is deceptive reality.**

The Mind-Only School challenges middle way through the following debate:

Mind-Only: "What state of mind is it that perceives deceptive reality?"

Middle-Way: "It is a deceived state of mind that perceives deceptive reality and thinks that it exists by definition."

Mind-Only: "Does that deceived state of mind think that the object exists?"

Middle-Way: "Yes."

Mind-Only: "So you are saying that nothing exists, you nasty nihilists! And you would probably say that karma and its consequences don't exist so you don't have to keep your morality."

Middle-Way: "The deceived state is deceived about the object existing by definition, but it is *not* mistaken in thinking that the object exists at all."

Four Great Schools of Ancient Indian Buddhism

1. **Abhidharma** or **Detailist** school. (*vaibhashika*) They follow an ancient book called the *Detailed Explanation*. They are lower way (*hinayana*) because they explain emptiness in a certain way.
2. **Sutrist** (*sautrantika*) school, also called logic and perceptual theory schools. They love to quote certain sutras. They are also *hinayana*.
3. **Mind-Only** (*chittamatra*) or Deep Practice (*yogachara* or *neln'jor chupa*) school. They are greater way (*mahayana*).

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Eight, continued

- 4a. **Middle-Way** (*madhyamika*) **Independent** (*svatantrika* or *rang gyurpa*) school. They believe in a logical approach that has some kind of *independent* effectiveness, which the consequence school doesn't accept.
- 4b. **Middle-Way Consequence** school. They are called consequence (*prasangika* or *teln-gyur*), or "absurd consequence" because they debate in such a way as to bring opponents to a correct understanding by pointing out the absurd consequences of their wrong views.

The two lower schools, **Detailist** and **Sutrist**, believe that external objects do exist and they are made of atomic particles that cannot be divided in space or time. There are particles that are infinitely small such that they don't have any sides (like a top or a bottom), and there are instances of time that are infinitely short that they can't be divided. In fact, the detailist school believes that these infinitely small particles or instances *are* ultimate reality. This is the stuff that everything in the universe is made of. This is a little bit like the Western scientific world view – if we can understand this kind of reality we can manipulate our world and make ourselves happy.

The **Mind-Only** School believes that external objects don't exist as constructed by atomic particles (which can't possibly exist). They say there is no such thing as a partless atom or indivisible instant of time, so there can't be any external objects that exist as aggregates of these non-existent building blocks. This doesn't mean that they believe that external objects are part of your mind or that everything is mind. They believe that external objects are built of building blocks, but this is not their ultimate nature.

The **Middle-Way Independent** school can be divided into two groups:

1. Those who **lean toward the Sutrists' view** believe that things exist as external objects, but they think that external objects are made of building blocks that are not indivisible – they are just so small that you can't perceive their sides, but they do have sides. This is actually more like an intelligent Western scientific view.
2. Those who **lean towards the Mind-Only School's view** believe that in the final analysis things don't exist as external objects, much as the Mind-Only School says.

The **Middle-Way Consequence** School also believes in external objects, but they mean something totally different than what the two lower schools believe. They simply believe that external objects are those things that exist outside of your mind and body, like a thing that wouldn't cause you pain if you stuck it with a pin. Empty space or emptiness are not included in the category of external objects, because external objects only include physical objects of the senses.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Eight, continued

Call Them the *Mainly-Mind-School*

The Mind-Only School takes their name from a sutra called the *Sutra of the Tenth Bodhisattva Level (Sa Chupay Do)* which says, “All the three realms are *nothing more than mind*” (*chittamatra* or *sem tsam*). Je Tsongkapa’s incredible explanation of emptiness (*gompa rabdse*) says: This quote doesn’t mean that everything is mind. Who do you think made the golden palaces of Vajrayogini’s paradise, and who do you think made the torture instruments of hell? They are only created by your mind because you hurt other people and collected the bad karma that is now forcing you to see these negative things.

They should have been called Only-Mind-is-the-main-thing school, or the mainly-mind-school, or the Mind-Only-is-the-main-thing-school. When the Only-Mind-is-the-main-thing school called themselves Mind-Only, they meant three things:

1. **Physical causes are not the main causes of things.** Asphalt and steel is not what mainly made New York City. The mind is what mainly made New York City. What mainly create New York City is only-mind or mind alone. The physical causes contribute to its creation.
2. **This world was not created by some kind of creator being.** Only mind is the main maker of this world. The sun coming up and down is a projection of each person’s individual karma from their past deeds. The Mind-Only School does believe that external objects exist, but not in the way that the lower schools believe; it’s just that they mainly come from your perceptions.
3. **Everything is of the same stuff**

གཟུགས་དང་གཟུགས་འཛིན་གྱི་ཚད་མ་རྫས་གཞན་གྱིས་སྣོང་པ།

SUK DANG SUKDZIN GYI TSEMA DZESHEN GYI TONGPA

Physical matter and the correct perception that grasps onto that physical matter are the same substance. This doesn’t mean that physical matter is actually mental stuff. It means that form and its perception come from the same karmic seed. The middle way agrees with this point but they don’t think that it is the true explanation of emptiness.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Nine: Emptiness According to the Independent Group

Tonight's class covers the Middle-Way Independent's School whose beliefs are the least evident through scriptures alone. It is hard to derive their beliefs only from scriptures. It was mainly Je Tsongkapa who clarified the distinctions between the Middle-Way Independence School and the Middle-Way Consequence School. The reading for this class is from the later textbooks on the Independent's view which is clearer for Westerners than is Je Tsongkapa's *Essence of Eloquence*. The Independence school says that emptiness or selflessness can be divided into three degrees of selflessness which correspond to three correspondingly higher capacity of the practitioners. Only the highest of the three degrees is actual emptiness. The lower two degrees of selflessness are not true emptiness although they are helpful to study because they correspond to views that many people hold. This presentation comes from the monastic studies of the Independent School, *rang gyupa*, and the Perfection of Wisdom scriptures.

Three Degrees of Selflessness

བདག་མེད་ལྷ་རགས་གསུམ།

DAKME TRA - RAK SUM
selflessness subtle gross three

Three degrees of selflessness. This division is unique to the Independent school.

གང་ཟག་གི་བདག་མེད་ལྷ་མོ།

1. GANGSAK GI DAKME TRAMO
person of selflessness subtle

Subtle lack of a self-nature of persons.

This is the least subtle of the three degrees.

This refers to the selflessness of a whole

person, like that fact that there is no self nature to Michael Roach. It is contrasted to the selflessness of the parts of a person which is presented in the next two degrees.

The gross (obvious or easy to perceive) lack of a self-nature of a person is too coarse of an idea to even include here, but we'll cover it later tonight.

ཚཱ་གྱི་བདག་མེད་རགས་པ།

2. CHU KYI DAKME RAKPA
person's of selflessness gross parts

Gross lack of a self-nature of objects.

Objects means the parts of a person, as opposed to the whole person.

ཚཱ་གྱི་བདག་མེད་ལྷ་མོ།

3. CHU KYI DAKME TRAMO
person's of selflessness subtle parts

Subtle lack of a self-nature of objects.

This is real emptiness according to the Independent school. They may use the term "devoid of..." to describe the lower two degrees of selflessness, but it's not really emptiness.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Nine, continued

Gross Lack of a Self-Nature of Persons

རྟམ་གཅིག་རང་དབང་ཅན་གྱི་བདག་

TAK CHIK RANG WANGCHEN GYI DAK **An independent self-contained, unchanging one self powered of self unchanging soul.** This gross self-nature of a person doesn't even qualify in Buddhism as something that we need to deny because it is so obviously non-existent. It is like a child's idea of a clear, eternal, unchanging soul that flies away and goes up to heaven when you die. *Tak* means unchanging. *Chik* means one whole compact thing. *Rang wangchen* means totally independent, something that can't be affected by causes and conditions. The fact that this kind of supposed self doesn't exist is called the gross lack of a self-nature of persons. This would be the self that carries around the five heaps, like the soul that contains but is independent from your body and mind. This is a "so-called" self that never existed in the first place. Note that *Dak*, self, doesn't necessarily refer to a sentient being, because it is also applied to the parts of a person (like your hand), as in the lack of a self-nature of objects.

The Three Tracks

ཐེག་པ་གསུམ།

TEKPA SUM **The three tracks.** You will travel along the five paths (attitudes or tracks three spiritual stages) of Buddhism on one or more of the three tracks. The study of the flow chart of twenty permutations is called *genden nyishu*.

The Subtle Lack of a Self-Nature of Persons

ཉན་ཐོས།

NYENTU **Listener,** (skt, *shravaka*; *shru* means to listen). This term refers to the listener listener fact that they can listen to mahayana teachings and report them to other people, but they don't have the ability to practice it, so they're just listening. This happens when people get sweet holy tantric teachings but are not mature enough to practice it. This is sometimes translated as hearers.

ཐེག་དམན།

TEK MEN **Lower way, hinayana** (*hina* even in Hindi means small or inferior). way lower These people theoretically don't have bodhichitta yet, and they can't perceive real emptiness in the correct way.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Nine, continued

རང་རྒྱུ་ཐུབ་པའི་རྗེས་ཡིན་དུ་གྲུབ་པ།

RANG KYA TUPPAY DZEYU DU DRUPPA To exist as a self-standing substantial thing. This term describes the version of ignorance which sees the subtle self-

nature of a person. It represents the lowest form of selflessness and the easiest to perceive, according to the Independent school. To this group of people, selflessness is the absence of this self-standing substantial thing. *Dzeyu du druppa* means that you are a director, controller, or driver of your body and mind which are supposedly separate from “you.” At some point in your life you will realize that there is no such thing as an independent driver, like the Wizard of Oz directing the show from behind the curtain. So when Listeners perceive this emptiness directly, they directly perceive that there is no independent guy running your body and mind. Then they use this realization to stop their mental afflictions and reach nirvana. Listeners do believe that there is a self that exists – which is the one who is listening to your thoughts.

The highest school in Buddhism, madhyamika prasangika, agrees that these disciples can see emptiness directly and can reach nirvana, but to do so they have to see real emptiness, as defined by the highest school, which in actuality is the only kind of emptiness there is.

The Gross Lack of a Self-Nature of Objects

རང་རྒྱུ།

RANG GYEL Self-made Buddha. Literally, the name means that they became a Buddha without a teacher, but this is totally impossible. You can't get anywhere in Buddhism without a completely qualified teacher. The text clearly says they didn't have teacher in this life, but in the past they had literally millions of teachers. They also are not full Buddhas, but have achieved a lower nirvana. So a self-made Buddha is someone who has achieved a lower nirvana without a teacher in this life – and all the scriptures say this.

ཐེག་མཉམ་ལ།

TEK MEN Lower way, hinayana.
way lower

གཟུགས་དང་གཟུགས་འཛིན་གྱི་ཚད་མ་རྗེས་གཞན་གྱིས་སྣོང་པ།

SUK DANG SUK NDZIN GYI TSEMA DZE - SHEN GYI TONGPA
physical and perceiver of valid substance different of devoid
matter perception

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Nine, continued

Physical matter and the mind that validly perceives it are devoid of coming from a separate substance – these two things don't come from different karmic seeds. This means that the karma that causes the objects and situations in your world, and the karma that causes your perception of those things are the same karmas. The fact that objects and your perception of them don't come from different karmic seeds is a kind of emptiness which is harder to see than the (Listeners') subtle lack of a self nature of persons. When these disciples realize selflessness, they are seeing the *obvious* form of the lack of a self-nature to objects (the parts of a person). According to the Mind-Only School this is the highest form of emptiness.

The Subtle Lack of a Self-Nature of Objects

གུང་སེམས།

JANG SEM Bodhisattvas.
enlightenment wish

སྟོང་པ་ཉིད།

TONGPA NYI Emptiness, (skt., *shunyata*). Disciples at this level perceive the subtle lack of a self-nature to *things*.
emptiness

ཚེས་ཐམས་ཅད་བདེན་པས་སྟོང་པ།

CHU TAMCHE DENPE TONGPA No existing thing in the universe has any
existing all true devoid **real existence.** This is the actual meaning
things existence of emptiness according to the Middle-Way
Independent School.

སྟོང་གཞི་མེད་ལ་སྐྱེང་བའི་དབང་གིས་བཞག་པ་མ་ཡིན་པར་ཡུལ།

LO NU ME LA NANGWAY WANG GI SHAKPA MA YINPAR YUL
state affected not to appearing power of established not it is object
of mind as existing

རང་གི་ཐུན་མོང་མ་ཡིན་པའི་བསྟོན་ལུགས་ཀྱི་ངོས་ནས་གྲུབ་པ།

RANG GI TUNMONG MA YINPAY DULUK KYI NGU NE DRUPPA
its own side its own identity not it is it existed

If there *could* be a thing that *could* exist from its own side through its own unique identity, without being simply established as existing by virtue of its appearing to an unaffected state of mind, that would be something that *truly* existed.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Nine, continued

This is the ultimate thing denied – the *gakja* – in this school. If a pen appears to an undistorted state of mind it can be said to exist. This sentence means that for a pen to exist two things must be present:

1. It has to be appearing from its own side as a pen.
2. I have to be perceiving it as a pen with a clear state of mind.

The metaphor of a magic trick is used to explain this view of emptiness according to the Middle-Way Independent School. A magician sprinkles magic powder on the audience and the stick they saw a minute ago now appears to them as a horse. Then a late-comer who was not charmed by the spell looks on and simply sees a stick.

1. The magician sees a horse but knows it's really a stick. The magician represents a person who has just seen emptiness directly but comes out of that direct perception and sees things as self-existent but knows that he's wrong and that they are really empty.
2. People in the original crowd see a horse and think it's a horse. These people represent someone who hasn't seen emptiness directly yet, who sees things as self-existent and believes things to be self-existent.
3. The late-comer doesn't see a horse and doesn't believe there's a horse. The late-comer represents a person on the eighth bodhisattva bhumi or higher to whom things don't even appear as self-existent due to working on their own mind and their understanding of emptiness.

This Middle-Way Independent School is a beautiful bridge or transition to take you from the Mind-Only School's view – that objects do exist from their own side through their own unique way of being – to the Middle-Way Consequence School (of Arya Nagarjuna, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Khen Rinpoche) who say that there is nothing out there that has any nature of being pen from its own side – it's nothing more than a karmic projection. To the Independent school, objects do exist from their own side, but not uniquely, because to exist they require that your mind thinks of them. Lord Buddha has set up this graded series of explanations of emptiness so people can progress in their understanding up to the highest view which is the real explanation of emptiness held by the Middle-Way Consequence School. They believe that there is a basis of imputation, like the cylinder onto which you project your image of a pen, but the cylinder doesn't have a nature of being a pen. If you don't look any further (*matak machepar*) this is okay, but if you want to discuss the emptiness of the cylinder you will see that there is no cylinder from its own side and it is merely imputed onto the basis of the parts of the cylinder, etc.

Understanding all of these views, most of which are incorrect, will help you to know where your students are coming from and to explain emptiness to them at their level of capacity. Many ideas floating around in America today don't even qualify as being the lowest Buddhist explanation of emptiness – such as “emptiness means that everything is changing and we have to adapt to change.”

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Nine, continued

The Three Scopes and the Three Vehicles

You should understand the difference between three divisions.

སྐྱེས་བུ་གསུམ།

KYEBU SUM
people three

Three scopes. These are three kinds of people described in Lam Rim.

1. Those who want to stay out of the lower realms, for their own benefit.
2. Those who want to escape suffering and permanently eliminate their mental afflictions, for their own benefit.
3. Those who want to reach total enlightenment, so they can teach other people to do the same.

ཐེག་པ་གསུམ།

TEKPA SUM
vehicles three

Three vehicles. There are two applications of the term:

1. Three progressively higher degrees of understanding emptiness:
 - a. Listeners, who like the four arya truths.
 - b. Self-made Buddhas, who like the twelve links of the wheel of life.
 - c. Bodhisattvas, who like the perfection of wisdom.
2. Three Ways – which are actually two ways, hinayana and mahayana, with tantrayana being subset of mahayana rather than a separate third way. The word tekpa literally means vehicular capacity as in the amount of weight that a pillar in a building can support, and it refers to whether or not you can carry the load of taking care of many other people as well as yourself.

ཐེག་དམན།

a. TEK MEN
way lower

Lower way, *hinayana*. Philosophically, they don't understand emptiness according to Mind-Only or Middle-Way presentations; and motivationally they don't have bodhichitta.

ཐེག་ཆེན།

b. TEK CHEN
way greater

Greater way, *mahayana*. Philosophically, they have a Mind-Only or Middle-Way understanding of emptiness and motivationally they have the capacity and desire to take care of an infinite number of sentient beings.

དོར་ཇེ་ཐེག་པ།

c. DORJE TEKPA
diamond way

Diamond way, *vadzrayana*, is a secret mahayana practice. It's a common misconception that vadzrayana is a separate way from mahayana. The definitions of these two are:

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Nine, continued

ཕར་ཕྱིན་གྱི་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོ།

PAR CHIN GYI TEKPA CHENPO
six perfections of way greater

The mahayana of the six perfections. This is the code name given to the open teachings. It is only a code name because tantra also totally requires practice of the six perfections

གསང་སྔགས་གྱི་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོ།

SANG NGAK KYI TEKPA CHENPO
secret words of way greater

Mahayana teachings of the secret words, or mantra. This is tantra.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Ten: The Ultimate Viewpoint

A Review of the Three Degrees of Selflessness

According to the Middle-Way Independent School, emptiness is the lack of existing truly, which would mean that things could exist from their own side through their own unique identity, without requiring that they appear a certain way to an unaffected mind. The Mind-Only School would say that some things do exist uniquely from their own side. To the Independent group this kind of absence is emptiness: the subtle lack of a self-nature of things.

According to the Mind-Only School, selflessness is the lack of my perceptions and the things they are perceiving coming from different karmic seeds. The Independent Schools calls this the gross lack of a self-nature of things, and says that this lack is a kind of dependent origination rather than real emptiness.

According to the two lower schools, it is the fact that people are devoid of having a nature of being self-supporting or self-standing and of having a substantial existence.

The gross lack of a self-nature of persons is an even coarser view that hardly any Buddhist school would accept as being what selflessness is. This is the lack of a self that could be unchanging, unitary or whole, and independent.

Five Flavors of Substantial vs. Constructed Reality

This material technically goes with class nine, and the reading for class nine is from Changya Rinpa Dorje who lived about three hundred years ago. He wrote an incredible long book that compared all the different systems of philosophy. He presents five different flavor of what it means for something to be substantial versus to be constructed. The Changya lineage served as teachers to the emperors of China, and Pabongka Rinpoche was actually in the Changya lineage.

ཇམ་ཡིད།

DZE YU
substance it is

Substantial.

བཏགས་ཡིད།

TAK YU
nominal it is

Constructed, nominal, not substantial or natural.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Ten, continued

ཡོད་པ། མེད་པ།

1. **YUPA vs. MEPA** **Existing versus non-existing things.** A thing that exists, like a pen, is substantial; and a thing that doesn't exist; for example, a mental image such as a flower that grows in mid-air is just imaginary. The self-nature of persons and the self-nature of objects also doesn't exist and therefore is merely constructed, for example a friend that gets you angry from their side. The irony of our suffering is that it comes from things that don't exist in the first place like a person who is nasty from their own side.

དངོས་པོ། དངོས་མེད།

2. **NGUPO vs. NGUME** **Functioning thing versus non-functioning existing thing.** functioning existing thing that A thing that functions or can do something, which is a thing doesn't function synonym for a changing thing, is considered by some to be a substantial thing. In the Sutrist School they distinguish between *chi-tsen* which refers to "a pen, this pen, the pen," and *rang-tsen* which refers to "pen" as a concept, idealization, or archetype, which is considered to be an unchanging thing that doesn't function. The concept pen isn't something that can run out of ink. *Ngume* means an existing thing that doesn't function, so it doesn't include non-existent objects which are not functioning things (such as empty space and permanent cessations).

བརྟན་པ་མི་འགྱུར་བ། མི་རྟག་པ།

3. **TENPA MIN GYURWA vs. MITAKPA** **Stable unchanging versus changing.** stable not altering changing Mitakpa doesn't mean "impermanent" because the emptiness of the pen is unchanging, but it is not permanent because it will go out of existence. This distinction is almost the same as number two above, because a changing thing is always a functioning thing and an unchanging thing never performs a function.

རང་རྒྱུ་བ། ལྷན་མིན་འདུ་བྱེད།

4. **RANG KYA TUPPA vs. DEN - MIN DUJE** **Self-standing versus other factors.** self-standing physical, not factor Self-standing refers to mental and mental physical things which are substantial. Changing factors (*duje*) refers to changing things which are neither physical nor mental, such as Marie, the changing person which is neither Marie's body nor mind. It doesn't refer to the conceptualization Marie, which would be an unchanging thing.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Ten, continued



5. WANG GYURWAPO vs. not that

For example, to think of an American Guy, you first have to perceive the guy's physical composite parts, and then form the image American Guy. This would be a thing which is constructed, or not substantial. A substantial thing would be, for example, colors which can be perceived without first perceiving the parts of the object; it doesn't require any conceptualization to be perceived.

The text by Changya Rinpa Dorje says that *wang gyurwapo* is what they really mean when they say self-standing vs. other factors (which is division number four above). He says the *real* meaning of substantial (*dzeyu*) is that the thing can stand on its own; which means that to perceive it you don't have to first perceive other composite parts of it the object. Conversely, a merely constructed thing (*takyu*) is a thing which, in order to perceive it, you must first perceive its composite parts.

The Middle-Way Independent School's Definition of Substantial

When Middle-Way Independent School says, "no substantial person exists," and that this is the gross lack of a self-nature of person. They have an entirely different meaning of being non-substantial.

KE GYUR Translator.
Tibetan changer

WANG GYURWAPO vs. not power to be empowered **The person who directs things**, the person in charge. This refers to the driver, the one who controls your body and mind, which is something that doesn't exist.

A Review of the Different Flavors of Selflessness

1. **Not called itself by definition.** This is emptiness according to the Mind-Only School.
2. **Subject and object don't come from the same karmic seed.** The lack of a person whose mind could be coming from a separate karmic seed from everything that mind is perceiving. This is real emptiness according to the Mind-Only School, but not according to the Middle-Way Independent School.
3. **No unchanging little ball of self.** The lack of an eternal, unchanging, solitary whole self, like your soul that exists after you die. This is the obvious selflessness of a person, according to the Middle-Way Independent School.
4. **No substantial self-standing self (driver).** The lack of a director who is independent of your body and mind who is driving them around. This is the subtle lack of a self to people, according to the Middle-Way Independent School.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Ten, continued

5. **Same as number 2 above.** This is the gross lack of a self to things, according to the Middle-Way Independent School.
6. **Doesn't exist from its own side without unaffected mind.** The lack of a self-nature of a pen that has its own unique identity from its own side independent of your perceptions of it as being a pen. For example, to see the horse, the stick has to be appearing as a horse and your mind must be under that spell. Unaffected state of mind means unaffected by temporary causes of error like drugs, alcohol, strong emotions or perceptual trick. It doesn't mean unaffected by the ignorance that sees things as self-existent.

According to the Mind-Only School, a tree does fall in the forest even if no one is there to hear it. According to the Middle-Way Independent School, the tree has to fall from its own side, and you have to perceive it. According to the Middle-Way Consequence School, there were some decibels and you turned it into the sound of the tree falling; but when you focus on the decibels they are also just a projection. To exist substantially is the thing we deny in the highest school.

མཉམ་འགྲུར་བ།

TELN GYURWA

Sarcastic Absurdity. This is the name for the **Middle-Way Consequence School**. The name comes from their belief that by responding to people's wrong beliefs with a sarcastic rejoinder, you can help them to realize the true nature of emptiness. This is the only literally true viewpoint of emptiness. It is the literal belief of Lord Buddha, Arya Nagarjuna, Master Chandrakirti, Je Tsongkapa, all the Dalai Lamas, and Khen Rinpoche – and it is the view that tantric practice is based upon. If you want to reach a tantric deity's body and mind in this lifetime, this viewpoint is very compelling, and you can prove it to yourself logically.

The Water Analysis

ལྷ་འབབ།

CHU BAP
water to fall

Waterfall. This comes from a section of Master Chandrakirti's text on Arya Nagarjuna's Root Wisdom. It explains that if a craving spirit sees some running water, when they go up to it for a drink, it turns into disgusting puss and blood and their thirst is unquenched. Because they have been stingy in past lives, their karma forces them to see the liquid as puss and blood. If you picture three beings from three different realms sitting around a table – a human, a craving spirit, and a deity – and someone brings them a glass of liquid. One being sees water, and this is what makes them a human. The craving spirit sees blood and puss in this same glass. The third being, the deity, sees in this glass the nectar of immortality. Each being is seeing the liquid validly because it functions quite well as water, pus, and nectar to the three beings, respectively.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Ten, continued

The metaphor of the pen comes from this Middle-Way Consequence School's water analysis. This is the correct understanding of emptiness, and when you actually see emptiness directly this is what you are perceiving. There actually are no degrees of emptiness. There are different objects which each have their own emptiness, but everything has exactly the same emptiness and everything is one hundred percent empty.

The fact that everything exists only the way that you see it doesn't mean that everything functions in an equally desirable or useful way. If you look at the world as full of creepy people that are out to get you, your world will function like this. You can also validly create a world of people who are trying to help you all the time, even if they seem to be trying to hurt you, and this is much more useful, gives you better karma, and can actually lead you to enlightenment. The whole point of Buddhism is to escape pain and constantly see things in a positive light. If someone followed a perfect moral code for non-Buddhist reasons such as to please an almighty god, they probably would not be able to sustain it. Really understanding how things work gives you the ability to sustain your behavior until the end. You must have the *prasangika* viewpoint to reach tantric enlightenment. If you are purposely acting purely because you understand how the process works, it gives you the extra energy to keep your morality in a way that no one else would be able to.

Just like a car engine, there are some philosophical and religious attitudes that really don't work in the end. You must have all of the critical concepts of a correct world view to reach your goals. Spiritual mechanisms work just like a car engine in this sense. There are many sweet and interesting paths that are useful and beautiful but won't get you to the final goal. Compassion and wisdom are they keys. From the tantric point of view, the sutrist path is so slow that you can almost say that it doesn't work. To get out of the wheel of suffering life you *must* see emptiness directly. There is no other way.

Dependent Origination in the Middle-Way Consequence School

ཏོཀཔེ་པར་ཏཀ་ཏམ་

TOKPE PAR TAK TSAM
by your from your merely labeled
projections side

All things exist as merely labeled from your side by your projections. This is the real meaning of dependent origination. If you don't look too closely there is a cylinder out there, nominally speaking, and your karma is forcing you to project a pen from your side.

The fact that things are just projections doesn't mean that you can do anything you want without any implications. Your karma is forcing you to project certain things based on your past actions, and therefore you must act ethically. Both your karma and the emptiness of the objects in your world have their own emptiness and are only projections. Living an ethical way of life is critical *because* everything is empty.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Ten, continued

The Middle-Way Consequence School's presentation of emptiness is especially important in your own search for enlightenment because the lower schools' viewpoints are not really emptiness. If these explanations of emptiness are true, and things have the least bit of existence from their own side then we are stuck with our aging bodies and minds and we are in trouble. The *prasangika* view of emptiness is the only one that could ever work. You can't change something if it is coming from its own side. By living an extraordinarily ethical way of life we can actually put an end to the processes of aging and death, become a tantric angel, and enter a tantric paradise in this very life.

The *Heart Sutra* says that the real goal of Buddhism is to stop our aging and death by eliminating our ignorance. American Buddhism has somehow left out this most important point. In order to see someone who has achieved this goal, you have to have collected the karma to be very close to it yourself. If all the dogs in the world swore that there were no pens in the world, would that be good evidence that they are right?

Je Tsongkapa's Final Word on Interpreting Lord Buddha's Speech

LU DRUP LUK SANG TSOWOR MIN DZIN SU
Naga-Arjuna beautiful system very best not considered who?

Who on earth would not consider the beautiful system of Arya Nagarjuna to be the very best?

At the end of his *Essence of Eloquence on the Art of Interpretation*, Je Tsongkapa makes this comment to clarify his actual view of Lord Buddha's teachings. He says that all of the other lower schools are very useful and beautiful, but only the system of Master Nagarjuna tells the whole story perfectly. The way things exist is as a projection forced on you by past karma, and if you want to get to heaven, you just have to clean up your karma. Therefore, you must study and keep your vows. The only way to do this in practice is to stop every hour or two and check your vows very consistently. You have to keep your vows with your family, friends and co-workers. This is how you get enlightened, because everything is a projection. It's the little things that make the difference.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Eleven: Class Review

When you look for the thing that got the label, like the cylinder that gets the label “pen,” you’ll never find anything. There is no pen there independent of the label “pen.” There is no such thing as the pen that existed before you thought of the cylinder as a pen. This is Je Tsongkapa’s explanation of the real nature of things which is held by the highest school of Buddhism.

Emptiness consists of the fact that certain non-existent constructs (that could exist by definition or that could be coming from a separate karmic seed) don’t apply to dependent things. The emptiness (*yongdrup*) of the pen (*shenwang*) is the fact that two kinds of wrong ideas (*kuntak*) don’t apply to it:

1. The pen could be the thing named “pen” by definition.
2. The forces that brought this pen into this room for me to look at, and the forces that are causing me to be standing here with an eye and eye consciousness looking at the pen, are totally unrelated.

Neither one of these ideas is correct.

According to the Mind-Only School, there were Greater-Way students listening to the second turning of the wheel who were very sharp and for whom the teaching that nothing exists by definition was intended, meaning for those Mind-Only students who realized that when Lord Buddha said that nothing exists by definition it really means that constructs don’t exist by definition but dependent things and emptiness do exist by definition. Saying that the third turning was intended for students who “have entered all the ways” refers to people of the greater who would have necessarily have already grasped the presentation of emptiness according to the lower way.

According to the Middle-Way School emptiness is ultimately reality, but nothing exists from its own side, meaning that nothing exists independent of your projections which are forced upon you by your past karma. Deceptive reality is the kind of reality where a deceived state of mind sees things as self-existent, but they are really empty. Any time you have a mental affliction toward anything you are having this deceived state of mind. According to the Mind-Only School, dependent things and constructs are deceptive reality and totality is ultimate reality; but dependent things do exist ultimately in this school because they exist by definition from their own side.

To the Middle-Way School, external objects are objects that are not subsumed by your consciousness, meaning that if you poke a pen with a pin you don’t say “ouch.” The Mind-Only School, and others who tend to agree with them, believe that nothing exists as an external object in the way that the lower schools believe – that external objects are composed of atomic particles and instances of time that have no sides or are indivisible. However, the Mind-Only School does believe in external objects if they are described as things that are coming from the same karmic seed as your perceptions of them. The Middle-Way Consequence School and those in the Middle-Way Independent School who lean toward the Sutrist School disagree with the Mind-Only School because you don’t have to believe in partless atoms in order to believe that there are external objects out there.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Eleven, continued

According to the Mind-Only School the pen as an object and the valid perception which is the subject which perceives the pen come from the same karmic seed, because there are no coincidences. There is no such thing as “an encounter,” like the pen is coming from the pen factory to the store and to this school, and then you come to this school for class, and you and the pen bump into each other. Both the pen and you as perceiver are growing and being sustained from the same karmic seed, and emptiness is the fact that no other view is true.

The Mind-Only School does believe in external objects and doesn't believe that the pen is coming only from your mind. They are called Mind-Only because the *Sutra of the Tenth Bodhisattva Level (sa chupey do)* says “these three realms of existence are mind only,” meaning that the mind is the main thing regarding the creation of your reality. Je Tsongkapa explains this in his *gomba rabdzel* as meaning that your world is not coming from some creator god; it is mainly coming from your mind.

The Mind-Only School says that *things exist from their own side with some unique identity of their own*. This statement mainly refers to the fact that because the pen exists as a dependent object that is produced by causes that exist externally, then the external object that they produce must also exist out there and not merely as a nominal thing. If the pen is something that you are only projecting with your mental constructs, then you don't need a pen factory and petroleum to have a pen, which is not the case according to the Mind-Only School. External causes are producing the pen.

In contrast, according to the Middle-Way School, your karma is producing your mental perception of a pen which is the real cause of the pen. Therefore, the way to change your reality is to change your morality and create better karmic projections. Ultimately, your financial success comes from whether or not you were generous in the past rather than from the quality of your proposal. Things are not created by external causes. The only thing that creates a successful grant is that you gave things away in the past; if the dog ate the proposal and you don't get the grant, the reason is that you were not generous in the past. Aspirin doesn't take away your headache because of some chemical composition in the aspirin. So why should you ever take aspirin if the only thing that can remove a headache is the creation of good karma in the past – such as working to relieve others' pain? You have to work on this question. Some people call the good karma the *cause* and the aspirin is the *factor* or cooperative condition, and believe that fifty percent of your world comes from your karma and fifty percent comes from external conditions. This is wrong view because it would mean that the aspirin has some kind of independent power from its own side to cure your headache. The karma to be able to afford a good doctor is very similar to the karma to be cured of a disease – but that doesn't mean that the doctor is what's curing you because people in the care of good doctors often die. If you take aspirin and your headache goes away, it would have gone away without the aspirin, but that doesn't mean that you shouldn't take aspirin.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Eleven, continued

The Buddha said that if you give away your money you will get rich and if you keep your morality you will be happy. However, the relationship between creating good karma and the pleasurable results that follow is not self-existent. The laws of good karma themselves are empty and are merely projections. When you see the fact that good deeds cause pleasure and bad deeds cause pain is still a projection, but the invariance of the consistency between causes and results doesn't mean that it's not just a projection, due to the nature of perception. It's true that fruit trees grow from their seeds *and* that they don't grow from self-existent causes, because the causes are also just projections, even when they are always required to produce a tree. But if you go down to hell, there are trees with knives for leaves that cut you badly, and these trees didn't grow from seeds or water.

The Middle Way Independent School are called *svatantrika* or "independent" because they believe that certain kinds of reasons have an independent existence, or certain reasons are independently effective for arguing emptiness. They believe in three degrees of selfless, but only the last one is considered to be real emptiness.

It is a Dharma rumor to say that there are three *tekpa's*, *yana's* or ways: hinayana, mahayana and vajrayana. There are really only two ways: hinyana and mahayana, and mahayana includes *open* mahayana (the way of the perfections) and *secret* mahayana (the way of the diamond, or the way of the secret word -- tantra).

The Mind-Only School says that one hundred percent of the object is coming from its own side. The Middle-Way Independents School says, in a sense, that about fifty percent of the object is coming from its own side and the other fifty percent is coming from my mind; the object has to be appearing and your unaffected, undistorted mind has to perceive it.

According to the Middle-Way Consequence School, *madhyamika prasangika*, there is no pen coming from the objects side. There is a cylinder there that is suggesting pen but there is no pen-ness out there. All of the pen-ness is imposed on the cylinder by your perceptions which are forced upon you by your past karma. If the pen had *any* small existence from its own side, then you are stuck here and won't be able to get enlightened because you won't be able to perceive your arm as Manjushri's arm and you won't be able to perceive your mind as an enlightened mind. If even one percent of the pen comes from its own side you can't become a Buddha.

If your Buddha nature existed from its own side then the thing covering it would also have to exist from its own side, and it could never be removed. If an object were changed because of externally self-existent causes then you could do it. In kids class we call it the difference between the *how* and the *why*. If you die in a car crash the *how* may be your head going through a windshield, but the *why* is that you hurt somebody in the past. *How* describes the circumstances that seem to be causing the thing. But the *how* is just an expression of the *why*. If windshields are what really kills people we are in trouble. What really kills people is their karma.

CLASS NOTES

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Class Eleven, continued

So where does the *cylinder* come from? When you examine the existence of the pen, you talk about the cylinder as if it were there from its own side – you leave it as if it existed *a priori* from the beginning. Then when you examine the cylinder, you see that it is a projection onto the parts of the cylinder. You can keep going down into lower levels endlessly and never find anything. You must always point out the implication of this emptiness in terms of karma. Things *do* exist as projections, and they are determined by your level of goodness and how well you keep your vows. Time itself is also just a projection according to the Middle-Way Consequence School. They see time as a concept which is a changing thing. Empty space is an unchanging thing but the concept “empty space” is a changing thing.

Your projections are forced upon you by your past karma, and that is why the fact that things are empty means that you must be moral if you want to be happy. You must practice the six perfections and you must track your vows six times a day. It’s a good sign if you start laughing when some teacher stands up and says that because things are empty you can engage in any kind of monkey business that you want to. *Because* things are empty you must keep your vows and you must practice the highest kinds of practices there are. The Middle-Way Consequence viewpoint is the only way to get enlightened. Whether or not you ever wake up and get to view your mind as being totally pure is also just a projection. People who have just reached nirvana are projecting a mind-state that is totally pure and has no more mental afflictions. Their virtue is forcing upon them an experience of their own thoughts as being totally pure. To hear your mind be this way is also just a projection and can only come from keeping your vows.

The *Heart Sutra* says that the real goal of Buddhism is to stop the process of aging and death, through stopping our ignorance (*marikpa sepa mepa ne gashi me, gashi sepay pardu yang me do*). This is a literal statement.