

**Questions from Audience**

**Question:** For Mind Only does all external phenomena include the five aggregates?

**Answer:** The Mind Only school doesn't believe in external phenomena so there is no question whether they would be the five aggregates or not.

**Question:** What aggregate is the self cognizing awareness Rang.rig?

**Answer:** It would be included in the fourth aggregate – compositional factors.

**Question:** Why don't we call the two truths one with the two aspects of ultimate and conventional?

**Answer:** Truths are separated into two because they are not posited in relation to one consciousness. They are posited in relation to different consciousnesses which are at differing levels. Conventional truth is based in societal level, which is grounded in ignorance/conception of true existence. Ultimate truth is posited in relation to a transcendental consciousness in meditative equipoise.

**Question:** Mind only school propounds eight consciousnesses. Which are the extra two?

**Answer:** The six are the same as the usual ones and the two extra are foundational consciousness and deluded consciousness. They are seriously important and I will elaborate on them in future.

**Question:** Re two Sutra schools

**Answer:** They generally agree, but differ on minor matters here and there. First is the sub-school following reason and the second is that which follows scripture, especially Vasubandhu's Abhidharmakosha, a Buddhist writing on metaphysics.

**Question:** Lorig question- Is the flame of a candle and fire of log fire the same in terms of their perceiving consciousness?

**Answer:** Both are the same. Heat of the fire/flame is an object of cognition of body consciousness; colour and shape of flame/fire are objects of visual consciousness.

**Question:** The five elements are objects realized by body consciousness, but not objects to be realized by eye consciousness, although they are seen by it. Inability to distinguish between the two – that which is to be realized is in terms of what is considered the main object of cognition.

**Answer:** The main object of the ground is the body consciousness, but it can be perceived by eye consciousness. What you see is only the colour and different physical attributes of the ground but it is the body which really experiences it. It is the body which really experiences the ground. Similarly – colour and shapes are main objects of visual consciousness.

It all boils down to a quote from a two line verse from Pramanavartika – “One does not do two functions, because the objects of the senses are unitarily specific.” One doesn't perform the function of two.

The ground is apprehended by eye consciousness, yes, but it is not the specific object of eye consciousness because tactile consciousness is the ground's main object. When we say eye consciousness apprehends the ground, it means it sees the colour and shape of the ground which indeed are attributes of it.

**Geshela asks questions:**

What is the definition of Vaibasheka School?-Hinayana, believes in external objects, but not in self-cognizing awareness.

Sutra school? –It does believe in self cognizing awareness, is Hinayana and believes in external objects.

Mind Only? –It is Mahayana, doesn't believe in existence of external objects, believes in self cognizing awareness.

What is an ultimate truth believed by Vaibasheka and Sutra School? – directionally partless particles (but for different reasons).

Is directionally partless particle considered a functional reality? For the Sutra school, yes they see it as ngopo/thing/impermanent functional entity and therefore an ultimate truth for Sutra school.

What is something ultimate for Sutra school, but not Vaibasheka school? A pot

What is something which is ultimate truth for Vaibasheka school, but not Sutra school? Space. Why is space not an ultimate truth for Sutra School – because it is permanent/nonfunctional. They consider such things as conventional truths.

Is there such a thing in Vaibasheka which is both ultimate and conventional truth? No – they are mutually exclusive.

What is the difference between a Hinayana person and a Hinayana proponent of that school? A Hinayanist describes the motivation of the person to achieve liberation for themselves alone where as a Hinayana proponent is a practitioner who holds the tenets of the two lower schools. Such a proponent may be a Mahayanist in outlook while still holding the Hinayana tenets.

Mind Only school example of ultimate and conventional truth? Ultimate truth example is an object non-dually realized by a valid cognition, for example subtle selflessness of person, emptiness of duality, truth of cessation.

What is the meaning of a proponent of a Buddhist School of thought? They believe in three jewels, do not ascribe to another refuge and belong to a school of thought.

How does a believer in self cognizing awareness talk about it? They say another consciousness perceives the first mind which remembers something. The second mind knows both the object and the mind which remembers the object.

What is an example of ultimate truth according to Sutra by explaining ultimate truth? Ultimate truth literally has reference to the cognizing consciousness. Ultimate refers to a cognizing consciousness. Ultimate truth refers to that which is unmistakably cognized by valid cognition. Things which are true for a non mistaken valid cognition are considered ultimate truths.

Conventional truth for Sutra school refers to a concealer, a conceptual mind, necessarily concealing in nature – concealing the object from the mind. A generic image forms a barrier which prevents direct perception. Truth for such a conventional mind is an aspect of appearance, a semblance of the object which is an aspect of appearance. This is taken to be that object when it is not.

For the Mind Only school and onwards, the ultimate refers to an arya's wisdom consciousness in meditative equipoise on emptiness. That is the ultimate.

Emptinesses, varying according to schools, are truths according to that ultimate mind.

The concealing/conventional for the two Madhyamika middle way schools refers to conception of true existence. Something that is true for that conception of true existence is a conventional truth/truth for concealer.

Conventional for Mind Only refers to the conception of existence of external objects, or the belief in their existence. That which is true for such a belief is conventional truth.

What are three attributes of the Mind Only school? 1) don't believe in external objects. 2) believe in self-cognizing awareness, and 3) are Mahayanists.

How does Sutra school believe in self-cognising consciousness?

**The main topic tonight is the two truths of Mind Only School in a more elaborate way.**

Mind Only see all phenomena as subsumed by three natures. 1) Shen-wang, Other powered/dependent phenomena 2) kun dak, Imaginary/ imputed phenomena, purely constructs of mind 3) Yong.drup) Thoroughly established phenomena, consummate. All phenomena come under these three. Of these three – the thoroughly established (or consummate) is ultimate and the first two are conventional truths.

Ultimate truths from Mind Only view are permanent and they have three types; 1) Subtle selflessness/emptiness of person. 2) Subtle selflessness of phenomena. 3) Truth of cessation. All of these three instances of ultimate truths have the same nature. They are permanent, there is nothing to be distinguished, but they are differentiated by their respective objects of negation.

1) The factor negated in subtle selflessness of person is the existence of a self sufficient substantially existent person. Such a thing is called subtle selflessness of person and is common to Mind Only, Sutra and Vaibashika schools – all have it in common. For Sutra school though it is a conventional truth. For Vaibashika and Mind Only it is considered an ultimate truth but for their respective different reasons.

2) Subtle selflessness of phenomena for the Mind Only school is the most problematic issue. It is posited in two ways; in relation to conceptual mind and in relation to sense consciousness.

In terms of sense consciousness the objects of the five sense consciousnesses are called form/matter. For the Mind Only school absence of a gap between the five forms and the sense consciousnesses is called subtle selflessness of phenomena. Put differently they say the objects and the sense consciousnesses are of the same entity, not different. Lack of difference between them is called subtle selflessness of phenomena.

If you believe there is a difference between the five sense objects and their consciousnesses, then you believe in a duality and this is the object of negation of the subtle selflessness of phenomena.

For example when we see an object visually, we think of the object and our consciousness as different. We see one as within and one as outside and therefore they are considered different.

Mind Only continued:

However actually, Mind Only says, form out there and consciousness within arise from the same substance of consciousness. Form seen and eye consciousness perceiving it both arise from the same substance of consciousness. Their convincing analogy using forms you see in a dream. These are mere aspects of appearance of form, but actually are empty of real form. It is just the consciousness itself appearing in the form of houses people etc. Dream things are no different from consciousness, and this, they say, is no different to what we experience in the waking state.

Mind Only have more examples, like the concentration on earth. They say meditators/ yogins with deep levels of concentration would look at a bit of ground and then visualize it as a patch of gold. Their concentration is so strong, the ground appears as gold, and they expand their scope of concentration so the same patch of earth is expanded to include the whole earth as gold. They say that the appearance of the whole earth as gold for a person in deep concentration is nothing but the play of the mind when actually there is no gold out there. Thirdly there is an example of a cup of water. When seen by humans it appears as water. For hungry ghosts it looks like pus and blood, for celestial beings it appears as real nectar. The reason this same cup of water appears differently to the different species, is that what appears is simply an aspect of the mind. These examples are from point of view of the affirmative.

From Mind Only's negative/negation point of view; directionally partless particles has been negated by Asanga in his writing Bodhisattvabhumi and by Vasubhandu in The 30 Stanzas and by Dharmakirti in Pramanavatika and by Dignath in Pramanasamucce, The Compendium of Valid Cognition.

This is a brief explanation about establishing selflessness of phenomena via sense consciousness, via negative and affirmative ways. The reasons used in relation to conceptual mind will be explained next time.

Geshela asks, what are the three natures? Other powered, imputed and thoroughly established.

How many ultimate truths are posited? Three, subtle selflessness of person and of phenomena and truth of cessation. How many subtle selflessnesses of phenomena are posited? Two; in relation to conceptual mind and in relation to sense consciousnesses.

When Mind Only asserts subtle selflessness of phenomena in relation to conceptual mind and sense consciousnesses they give examples of dreams, and concentration which imagines the earth to be gold and water perceived as three things to three types of beings. These are reasons given to show that there are no phenomena out there apart from a consciousness appearing as external phenomena. The reason used to establish subtle selflessness of phenomena is that if there were external phenomena there would be directionally partless particles. This is the object of negation. Many great Buddhist masters have negated that and say there could not be such particles for reasons of contiguousness, they touch each other, and so must have parts.

In Tibet, historically, Buddhist masters have posited subtle selflessness of phenomena in relation to sense consciousnesses before Lama Tsong Khapa. But it was he who elucidated it in relation to conceptual mind. It was he who made it clear. For this reason we say, "You are the crown jewel of scholars in the Land of Snows".

If we get a sound understanding of the negation of external objects according to the Mind Only school, it will pave the way for good understanding of the view of emptiness in the Madhyamika School. If we understand foundation consciousness of Mind Only school – which is very sophisticated, that would help a great deal in understanding the mind of clear light discussed in highest yoga tantra.

Geshela has an appeal – Lately in Tibet many monks (and nuns and lay people) have set themselves on fire. The situation there has become unbearable and is so severe that the exiled Tibetan government calls on all to empathize by doing a fasting vigil. Geshela requests anyone who can to do this on Wednesday to come to the Lower Octagon. This would be greatly appreciated. In the space of the last two months 8 have self immolated. Five have died and three are in critical condition. It is a desperate plea to be allowed to practice Buddhism in the way they would like to. They have appealed to the Dalai Lama to return to Tibet. Not only has this been denied but the brutal repression by the Chinese has worsened lately. So Tibetans have taken to this course of action. If you can come, and have no objections, conscientious or religious etc, please make an appearance. If you know others who could sympathize, talk to them as well. This is not a protest against Chinese people or even their government; it is just that these Tibetans have made this appeal to be given free expression of their Buddhist practice and for the return of their spiritual leader. He is not now even a political leader. This request was met with a strong backlash. We are free and must do something to help.

