

The Refutation of an Identification of the Object of Negation That Is Too Narrow

Tsongkhapa · Tsong Khapa

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The refutation of an identification of the object of negation that is too narrow
by Tsong Khapa

Sub-section titles are in the form: L#: [...].

These can be used to regenerate the structure using a Word Processor.

Paragraph starting with '¢(i.e. ...' are usually added comments by me.

L1: [CONTENTS]

L1: [CONTENTS]

L1: [Introduction]

L1: [First, refuting the assertion that the object of negation is that which has the three
attributes [that is not enough]]

L1: [Second, in our system the nature possessing the three attributes is emptiness]

L2: [Nothing exist on its own, without being imputed by the mind, as an inherently existing
object – but they do exist as imputed objects, as conventional truths. The problem comes
when we pass from conventional truths to absolute truth / inherent existence]

L2: [From conceptual realization to a direct realization beyond all dualities]

L1: [Third, refuting the assertion that reality is independent and positive]

L1: [Introduction]

The Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path (lam rim chen mo) is the first of Tsong
Khapa's five major works on the Middle Way School (dbu ma pa, madhyamika). He composed it in
1402 when he was forty-five years old.

The last section of the Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path is on special insight
(lhag mthong, vipasyana), wherein Tsong Khapa discusses emptiness. From within this section
on Special Insight, the following chapter is entitled, “The Refutation of an Identification
of the Object of Negation That Is Too Narrow.” (dgag bya ngos 'dzin khyab chungs ba dgag pa
[860.4-870.1])

When combined with the previous chapter of Tsong Khapa's text -- which describes the refutation of an object of negation that is too broad (See Elizabeth Napper's *Dependent-Arising and Emptiness*, Wisdom Publications, 1989; pages 152-215) -- this discussion of an object of negation that is too narrow completes the discussion of incorrect identifications of the object of innate ignorance. In Tsong Khapa's system, correctly identifying the object of negation is an important step in the avoidance of extreme views and the realization of emptiness.

Only by avoiding extreme views can one UNDERSTAND THE ACTUAL OBJECT OF NEGATION IDENTIFIED BY TSONG KHAPA—THAT THINGS ARE ESTABLISHED BY WAY OF THEIR OWN ENTITIES (rang gi ngo bos grub pa).

THE REALIZATION THAT THINGS ARE NOT ESTABLISHED BY WAY OF THEIR OWN ENTITIES -- OR FROM THEIR OWN SIDES -- IS THE REALIZATION THAT THEY ARE EMPTY OF INHERENT EXISTENCE (rang bzhin gyis stong pa).

Page numbers to the Dharmasala edition of the Tibetan text are inserted into the translation in square brackets. Headings are according to Jam-yang-shay-ba's interlinear table of contents from the Four Interwoven Annotations.

L1: [First, refuting the assertion that the object of negation is that which has the three attributes [that is not enough]]

Some [Tibetans] say:

[On the occasion of this Consequence School] that which is to be refuted is nature and that [Consequence School object-of-negation nature] possesses the THREE ATTRIBUTES of:
-- an entity attribute—that it is not produced by causes and conditions (i.e. unitary)
-- a state attribute—that it is immutable (i.e. permanent)
-- a certification attribute—that it does not depend on another. (i.e. independent)

These three attributes, moreover, are mentioned in Nagarjuna's *Treatise on the Middle*, which says:

\ The arising of nature due to causes and conditions is not reasonable.
\ A nature produced by causes and conditions would have a nature of fabrication [i.e. not immutable].
\ How could nature be said to be fabricated?
\ Nature is non-fabricated and does not depend on another. [861]

In general, if it were asserted that external and internal things such as sprouts and so forth are established as such natures having the three attributes, then proponents of the Middle also would have to refute such.

[BUT THE REFUTATION OF SUCH AN IMMUTABLE, CAUSED, DEPENDENTLY ARISEN NATURE IS NOT SUFFICIENT].

Here the identification of the object of negation is the identification of the root object of negation through which the Middle Way view realizing the lack of nature of phenomena is generated in one's continuum when it is refuted without depending [on negating something else also].

For, our own schools such as the Great Exposition and Sutra Schools, and so forth, have already established that products, compounded phenomena, are created by causes and conditions and that they change. Therefore [if the object of negation is as you say it is] then there would be the faults that it would not be necessary to prove the lack of existence by way of nature to those schools [i.e., the Great Exposition and Sutra Schools], and so forth. Hence, how could your identification be getting at the final uncommon object of negation!

[Proponents of True Existence say that] things have a nature in the sense of establishment by way of their own entities. In response to that, [the Consequentialists] make the logical extension that "if things were established by way of their own entities, then they would not depend on causes and conditions, would be immutable, and so forth." Although there are many such logical extensions in Middle Way texts, those are cases of expressing fallacies from the viewpoint of a pervader [something wider]. This is not an identification of the object of negation from the viewpoint of its own entity.

[Another reason is that] if something is ultimately established, really established, and truly established, then it must not be produced by causes and conditions, it must be immutable, and so forth; but even if that is so, still, not being produced by causes and conditions and so forth is not the meaning of being ultimately established and so forth.

For example, although impermanence pervades pots, impermanence is not suitable as the meaning of pot; whereas that which is a bulbous thing, and so forth, is posited as the meaning of pot. Similarly, if something is ultimately established and so forth, then it would have to be a partless thing. Still, partless thing is not asserted to be the basic object of negation here. Since such partless things are just imputed by the uncommon conceptions of proponents of [false] tenets, such a conception [exists only among those whose mental continuums are affected by tenets and thus] is not the root that binds the embodied in cyclic existence. [390.5]

Although one meditated on partless things as empty of nature upon delineating [such a view], that would not damage at all the innately ignorant conception (ma rig pa'i 'dzin pa) that has operated since beginningless time. Hence, even though one brought to completion the direct realization of that meaning [i.e., the lack of inherent existence of partless things, and so forth], this would not at all damage the innate afflictive emotions (lhan skyes kyi nyon mongs) as well.

[THE REFUTATION OF SUCH A PARTLESS NATURE IS NOT SUFFICIENT]

When the view is delineated, one is to consider the refutation of the conceived object of innate ignorance to be the main point, and refute the conceived object of artificial ignorance as a branch of that.

[THE REFUTATION OF THE ARTIFICIAL IGNORANCE / SELF VIEW IS NOT SUFFICIENT]

If, not knowing that the main thing is to use the artificial as a branch of that,
-- one forsook refuting the mode of apprehension of an innately ignorant consciousness
-- and at the time of refuting a self of persons refuted a permanent, unitary, independent

self

-- and at the time of refuting a self of phenomena refuted the apprehended, objects that are partless particles and apprehending consciousnesses that are partless moments and the nature possessing the three attributes, and so forth, that are imputed only by proponents of tenets, then such refutations are unsuitable in all ways. [862.5]

If it were not unsuitable, then, since when delineating the view one delineated nothing beyond the non-existence of a permanent, unitary, and independent [self], and so forth, then at the time of meditation also one would have to meditate only on such. Why? Delineation of the view is for the sake of meditation. Therefore, even if one manifested such a selflessness upon meditation, and completed familiarization with it, that would be exhausted as only that [i.e., manifestly perceiving the non-existence of a permanent, unitary, and independent self. [863]

If one did assert in that way that merely directly perceiving the non-existence of the two selves only as they are imputed by artificial conceptions can abandon the innate afflictions, desire, and so forth, that would be extremely absurd.

[THE REFUTATION OF THE ARTIFICIAL IGNORANCE IS NOT SUFFICIENT TO ABANDON THE INNATE AFFLICTIONS, DESIRE AND SO FORTH.]

Chandrakirti's Introduction (madhyamakavatara) [VI.140] states:

\ [You propound] that when selflessness is realized
\ One abandons the permanent self, [but] you do not assert that
\ As the base of the conception of self.
\ Hence, it is fantastic to propound
\ That through knowing selflessness the view of self is eradicated.

Chandrakirti's Auto-Commentary says:

~ In order to illuminate by way of an example this senseless proposition that the innate conception of a self is abandoned through only refuting a permanent self, the root text says that:

~ When an ignorant person sees a snake living inside the wall of the house and is frightened, another person says, "Do not be frightened by that snake. There is no elephant inside the wall." Alas, the assertion that fears of a snake could be removed by the words that there is no elephant is source of laughter by others, when they see this. [863.3]

~ Even though this is mentioned with respect to the selflessness of persons it also should be applied to the selflessness of phenomena:

~ When [they assert that] the selflessness [of phenomena] is realized, they abandon an artificial self [of phenomena] and therefore they do not assert this [artificial self] as the basis that is ignorance. Therefore the proposition that [the innate] ignorance is removed by knowing the non-existence of [artificial] self [of phenomena] is very amazing. [863.5]

L1: [Second, in our system the nature possessing the three attributes is emptiness]

[OBJECTION:] When the Master Nagarjuna set forth non-fabrication and non-dependence on another as the characteristics of the entity of nature, did he speak hypothetically or does such a nature exist in fact?

RESPONSE: The reality which is mentioned [in the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras] in the phrase "whether the Tathagatas appear or not the reality of phenomena [just abides]" is posited as the nature. This is non-fabricated and does not depend on another. That nature does exist. (i.e. It is not completely non-existent. Otherwise that would be nihilism.) [863.6]

Chandrakirti's Auto-Commentary supplies a scriptural source:

- OBJECTION: Does the Master Nagarjuna assert that a nature qualified in such a way exists or not?
- RESPONSE: That reality in terms of which the Supramundane great Victor says in the perfection of Wisdom Sutras, "whether the Tathagatas appear or not the reality of phenomena just abides" exists.
- OBJECTION: What is this reality?
- RESPONSE: It is the final mode of abiding of these phenomena, eyes, and so forth.
- OBJECTION: What is the nature that is the mode of abiding of these like?
- RESPONSE: It is their non-fabricatedness, i.e., non-falsity, their mode of subsistence which does not depend on other causes and conditions and is the entity realized by a Superior's knowledge of meditative equipoise free from the visual dimness of ignorance and its predispositions by way of not being polluted by those.
- OBJECTION: Does that nature exist?
- RESPONSE: Who could say that it does not exist? If it did not exist, for what purpose would Bodhisattvas cultivate the path of the perfections? Bodhisattvas initiate hundreds of efforts for the sake of realizing such a reality.

¢(i.e. Even if everything is empty of inherent existence, it is not completely non-existent. Otherwise that would be nihilism. They exist "conventionally".)

L2: [Nothing exist on its own, without being imputed by the mind, as an inherently existing object – but they do exist as imputed objects, as conventional truths. The problem comes when we pass from conventional truths to absolute truth / inherent existence]

- OBJECTION: Did you not earlier refute an establishment by nature with respect to all phenomena?
- RESPONSE: Did we not say earlier many times that there does not exist in phenomena even a particle of the nature that is establishment by way of a thing's own entity (rang gi ngo bos grub pa'i rang bzhin) and which does not depend on internal mental imputation? Therefore what need is there to say anything about other phenomena, products and so forth, as being established as a nature in the sense of being established by way of their own entities without depending on internal imputation! Even the reality of things, the ultimate truth, is not in the least established as such a nature.

(i.e. even emptiness, the ultimate truth, is conceptually interdependent with the concept of "inherent existence", also a conventional truth)

- Chandrakirti's Clear Words says:

~ Because it is thus, therefore, that which, even in all three times, is the non-fabricated fundamental entity non-mistaken in fire, that which is not the subsequent arising of something that did not arise previously, and that which does not have reliance on causes and conditions, as do the heat of water or near and far, or long and short, is said to be the nature [of fire].

~ OBJECTION: Does there exist such a non-fabricated and non-relative entity of fire?

~ RESPONSE: Such a nature is not existent by way of its own entity (rang gi ngo bo, svarupah) and is not [utterly] non-existent either.

¢(i.e. The Middle Way between the extremes of existence and non-existence. It is said that they do not exist in order to fight the extreme of reification; and it is said that they do exist “conventionally” in order to fight the extreme of nihilism. Two complementary adapted skillful means to be used until one can transcend this duality.)

~ Though it is so, in order to get rid of the fear of the listeners, when this is taught, it is said upon making a superimposition that it exists conventionally.

- Thus Chandrakirti (i.e. The Middle Way between existence and non-existence)
- -- refutes that a nature is established by way of its own entity (i.e. not existing) and
- -- says that it exists conventionally. (i.e. not non-existing)

OBJECTION: Chandrakirti says that [such a non-fabricated entity of fire] is taught to be conventionally existent upon making a superimposition in order to get rid of the fear of listeners. The Master [Chandrakirti] himself does not assert that it exists.

¢(i.e. Seems like the opponent is stuck in the duality of existence and non-existence. For him it is either one or the other. He cannot grasp at the possibility that it is not one, nor the other, nor both, nor neither.)

RESPONSE: That is not reasonable. Those which [exist conventionally] upon imputation for the purpose of abandoning the fear of listeners are not just the nature but other phenomena also. If such a nature did not exist, then all other phenomena also would be senseless. Also, Chandrakirti's Auto-Commentary states: [865.4] It is not just that the master Nagarjuna asserts this nature; also other persons can be caused to assert the meaning of this nature [in debate]. Hence, this nature is also presented as just established for both [disputants].

¢(i.e. Non-existence would lead to nihilism, a-morality, and the rejection of all paths.)

Otherwise [if nature were non existent], one would have to assert that the Middle Way system asserted that release could not be attained [because the cessation which is an ultimate truth did not exist]. The attainment of nirvana means the actualization of nirvana, and nirvana on this occasion is explained as true cessation and because [true cessation] is said to be the ultimate truth, the ultimate truth would not exist [if the nature did not exist]. Moreover, the source for this—Chandrakirti's Commentary on (Nagarjuna's) 'Sixty Stanzas of Reasoning'—proves with much vigor that when nirvana is attained the ultimate truth of cessation must be actualized. [866]

¢(i.e. Well it is probably more subtle than this, because Nagarjuna also said that there is

no real origination, duration and cessation ... and later that there is no real Nirvana, that Nirvana and samsara are not different.)

Compounded phenomena such as eyes, and so forth, are not established as a nature in the sense of establishment by way of own entity or nature meaning reality when reality is posited as nature. Hence, [compounded phenomena such as eyes, and so forth] are not established as any nature. Although the ultimate truth is established [as the nature in the sense of] positing reality as nature, [an ultimate truth] is posited by way of its two positors, non-fabrication and non-dependence on another, and hence [the ultimate] does not at all come to be established by way of its own entity. Therefore [the ultimate] is only established conventionally.

¢(i.e. Nirvana is also a conventional truth. The real nature of everything is being established conventionally, but not being established inherently. That is the same as saying that everything is not inherently existing, but still not completely non-existent. The Middle Way between the extremes of existence and non-existence. The goal of the path is to transcend this duality: not accepting it, not rejecting it.)

Here, being fabricated means not existing earlier and being created as a new arising. Depending on another means depending on causes and conditions. [866.3]

Forms and so forth are not established as either of those two types of nature. Therefore, one cultivates the path in order to see the nature that is reality. Hence, [Chandrakirti] says that its basis, pure behavior, is not senseless.

- Moreover, it is explained that it is not contradictory utterly
- -- NOT TO ASSERT A NATURE OF PHENOMENA IN THE SENSE OF THEIR ESTABLISHMENT BY WAY OF THEIR OWN ENTITY and
- -- TO ASSERT FOR EACH PHENOMENA A [REALITY] NATURE THAT IS A CONVENTION.

Chandrakirti's Auto-Commentary states:

~ OBJECTION: Incredible! Amazing! You persons who assert there are no inherently existent things at all and who also contingently, i.e., conventionally, assert a nature that is non-fabricated and not dependent on others are propounding something that is mutually contradictory and senseless.

¢(i.e. Seems like the opponent is stuck in the duality of existence and non-existence. For him it is either one or the other. He cannot grasp at the possibility that it is not one, nor the other, nor both, nor neither.)

~ RESPONSE: You who say such do not understand that the thought of these statements in [Nagarjuna's] Treatise is that if just these entities of eyes, and so forth, which are dependent-arising and which are apprehendable by childish ordinary beings were the nature of those entities of eyes and so forth, then such a nature would be realized even by those who are erroneous. In that case, maintenance of purity would be senseless. Therefore, just these [entities of eyes and so forth] are not the final nature, and hence maintenance of purity for the sake of viewing that [final nature] are purposeful.

¢(i.e. There is no fault in affirming that something can be not inherently existing, but still not completely non-existent, or existing conventionally. On the contrary, it is affirming that something can be inherently existing and dependently arisen that doesn't

make sense. Dependent origination and emptiness are not in opposition; but dependent origination and inherent existence are in opposition.)

[Regarding how it conventionally exists having the three attributes, Chandrakirti himself] says that, in terms of conventional truth, [the final nature] is not fabricated and is not dependent on other [causes and conditions]. That [entity] which is not something seen by childish beings is suitable to be the [final] nature. Due to just those [positors of this as a nature], just that ultimate is not a thing (dngos po, bhava) and is also not a non-thing, because that ultimate is by nature pacified [of all elaborations].

¶(i.e. The real non-dual nature of everything is beyond the extremes of existence and non-existence. It is called the Union of conventional truths (dependent origination) and ultimate truth (emptiness), where one transcend this apparent duality. Things are empty of inherent existence, but still exist conventionally (or are not completely non-existent). That is the skillful means used to stay away from all extremes until one can transcend the duality.)

Here [in this context of the above quotation from Chandrakirti's Auto-Commentary], -- "existing as a thing" (dngos po yod pa)—as explained before on the occasion of discussing the dualistic propositions [of existing as a thing or not existing as a thing]—means "existing by way of own entity" (rang gi ngo bos yod pa). -- "Not existing as a thing" (dngos po med pa) means "[its entity] not existing at all" (ngo bo ye med).

When one delineates that phenomena do not have a particle of establishment as nature in the sense of being established by way of their own entity, THE EMPTINESS OF NATURE EXISTS AS AN ATTRIBUTE (khyad chos) OF THESE PHENOMENA, FORMS AND SO FORTH, WHICH SERVE AS THE SUBSTRATA (khyad gzhi). Hence, there is no contradiction in both existing as objects of one mind and since that dualistic appearance has not vanished, THAT EMPTINESS BECOMES AN IMPUTED ULTIMATE TRUTH.

¶(i.e. Until we can transcend all dualities and realize the Union of the Two Truths, we have no choice but to work with dualities. In that sense the conventional truths (dependent origination) and their emptiness form an apparent duality. We see them as complementary, inseparable, not different not the same, ... But this is just pointing at the moon; their real nature is beyond all conceptualization. We see emptiness as an attribute of things that are usually seen as inherently existing. So dependent origination and emptiness becomes two complementary antidotes; one fights the extreme tendency of the other. That is the Middle Way: not absolute, but only adapted skillful means.)

L2: [From conceptual realization to a direct realization beyond all dualities]

When through cultivating just that view realizing a lack of nature [in the sense of inherent existence] ONE DIRECTLY REALIZES THAT MEANING, in the face of that all mistaken [appearances] that are the appearances of [phenomena as established by] nature—whereas none are established by nature—have vanished. Hence the consciousness that DIRECTLY ACTUALIZES REALITY does not observe or see the subjects, forms and so forth. Therefore, the pair—the reality and the subjects—does not exist in the face of that awareness. Hence, the positing of those two, reality and substrata, must be done by way of some other conventional awareness.

In that case, the ultimate truth is posited as a mere vanishing of all mistaken appearances that are the appearances of [phenomena] as established by nature [in the sense of inherent existence]—whereas none are established by nature—in addition to (steng du) the pacification of all elaborations of the object of negation, that is to say, establishment by way of a thing's own entity. Hence, although such [an ultimate truth] is asserted, how can it be necessary to assert a [reality] nature that is established by way of its own entity?

¢(i.e. So a non-dual real nature beyond all conceptualization is asserted as a skillful means pointing at the moon, but that doesn't mean that anything is inherently existing, on its own. The real meaning of this has to be directly seen.)

Chandrakirti's Clear Words says:

~ That entityness which by its nature becomes the object of those Superiors free from the dimness of ignorance, in the manner of non-perception of the aspects of things that are observed through the force of the dimness of ignorance, is posited as the nature of those [things].

It also says:

~ The lack of production which is the [final] nature of things is not anything at all and hence is just a non-thing because it lacks entityness. Therefore, that nature of things does not exist. [868.5]

L1: [Third, refuting the assertion that reality is independent and positive]

Some [i.e., the Jo-nang-bas following Dol-bo Shay-rap-gyel-tsen] did not posit the ultimate truth as a mere elimination of the elaborations of the two selves, the object of negation, and so forth. They asserted that when one realizes the ultimate mode of being, [that entity] appears—as the object of a non-erroneous mind—in the way that blue, yellow, and so forth appear in the manner of being established independently (rang dbang du). They also asserted that the ascertainment of its existing in this way is the view realizing the profound meaning.

Also, they assert that the realization of these external and internal phenomena—which are the bases that sentient beings misapprehend as the two selves—as not existent [by] nature (rang bzhin [gyis] med pa), is a place for going astray with respect to the correct view (lta ba'i gol sa).

Such assertions are outside the sphere of all the scriptures of the Greater and Lesser Vehicles (theg pa che chung) because (1) those [Jo-nang-bas] assert that it is necessary to overcome the conception of self that is the root binding persons in cyclic existence and (2) the bases that are apprehended by this [conception] as self are these [phenomena] realized as not existent by nature. Hence, without overcoming that, they assert that the conception of self is overcome through realizing some other phenomenon unrelated with that [conception of self] as true.

Regarding this, for instance, it is no different than if [some person] conceives there is a snake to the east and becomes distressed, and if [someone else] thinking the distress cannot be overcome by thinking there is no snake to the east—instead says,

~ "Think on the fact that to the west there is a tree. Through this, you will get rid

of your conception of a snake in the room and will overcome your distress."

Therefore, those who wish goodness for themselves banish such to the distance and [work vigorously at] the means of eradicating the mode of apprehension of ignorance—that which binds beings in cyclic existence and is the root of all ruin. In dependence on the texts of the superior Nagarjuna and his sons that clearly set forth the vast and manifold collections of reasonings that establish deep ascertainment of the scriptures of definitive meaning and show that the meaning of those is not suitable to be interpreted otherwise, go beyond the ocean of cyclic existence.

[I, Tsong Khapa,] have seen that these refutations of wrong ideas with respect to the object of negation are very valuable for eliminating the places where one goes wrong in finding the middle view. Therefore I have explained them at length. [870.1]

[End]

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