

The Ultimate Nature of Phenomena

Lama Zopa Rinpoche · Lama Zopa

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The Ultimate Nature of Phenomena

by Lama Zopa Rinpoche

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

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

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L1: [The Ultimate Nature of Phenomena]

(ABC Newsletter, May-Jun 97)

L2: [Part I]

L3: [A. Presentation of the ultimate truth : emptiness : everything is merely imputed by the mind]

Let us bring our attention to the very nature of phenomena, the ultimate nature of phenomena
- the ultimate nature of the "I", actions, objects, and all there is.

¢(i.e. THE AFFIRMATION OF EMPTINESS, THE ULTIMATE TRUTH.

¢-- SHOWING THE DEPENDENCE WITH THE MIND.

¢-- FIGHTING THE EXTREME OF REALISM --)

\ Since everything - what is called "this" and "that" - is
\ all name coming from the mind, given by the mind,
\ it means that EVERYTHING IS MERELY IMPUTED BY THE MIND.
\ Therefore nothing exists from its own side.
\ There is no "I" existing from its own side.

¢(i.e. everything is empty of inherent existence)

¢(i.e. Antidote 1 : Emptiness fights Eternalism.)

¢(i.e. THE THINGS WE THINK WE ARE SEEING ARE JUST VISUALIZATIONS :)

The part of the appearance of the "I", the part of the view of the "I", appearing as something real from there, and the actions, objects, and all the rest of the phenomena appearing that way, as something existing from its own side, as though there is something on the base, or something appearing from there - all these are HALLUCINATIONS (i.e. The way we think things and all exist is not exact.). The "I", yourself, actions, objects, and all phenomena, including body and mind, anything appearing to you in that way, existing from its own side - all of these are hallucinations. Which means ALL THESE THINGS DO NOT EXIST.

¢(i.e. Emptiness means that things are dependently arisen. Everything is empty because dependently arisen. That means that nothing is really existing on its own because they are all dependent. There are many levels of understanding dependence, and with the different kind of dependence analyzed there is a different understanding of emptiness. The deepest dependence to analyze is the dependence of everything on the mind perceiving them.

¢-- There is not pure, objective, impartial, perception of anything. We are not getting to the essence of things like Plato thought. All perceptions are conditioned by the receptors (the sense organs), the mental predispositions and expectations (acquired internal models used to assimilate the experiences). All perceptions are conditioned by past karma. All perceptions, and thus the things we think we see, are dependent on past karma. Thus nothing, we think we objectively see, is really independent of the mind seeing it. Nothing really exist independent of the mind. But that does not mean that nothing exist at all.)

¢(i.e. Warning: everything we think we see is an illusion)

\ THE WAY THINGS APPEAR TO ONE'S HALLUCINATORY MIND IS NOT TRUE.

¢(i.e. Don't fall for your own creations.)

HERE IS AN EXAMPLE which might give some idea to those who are not clear what the false view is, what the hallucination is, and what is true and what is false regarding our view. At dusk, when the sun has set, there is A PIECE OF ROPE ON THE ROAD, lying curled like a snake. Because it is dark, the rope looks like a snake. It causes the mind to make up the label "snake." The mind labels that there is a snake there. When the mind labels "snake," and you believe in the label, there is then the appearance of a snake. You then believe you are seeing a snake.

So you think that, even though there is no snake, and snake does not exist. You think that, even though there is no snake at all, not even the slightest atom of it on that rope. You simply cannot find snake on that rope - in reality there is no snake there at all. Even though that is the reality, in your view, after you believe in your label, you see it as a snake appearing from there.

You can see, from this example, that something appearing from there doesn't mean it is true. It doesn't mean it really appears from there, that there is something existing from there. Just because you see it that way, and it appears to you that way, doesn't mean, and doesn't prove, that it exists from there, from its own side. In this example, not even the slightest atom of snake exists on that rope. That snake neither exists on that rope nor exists anywhere. That snake exists nowhere. Even though it appears existing from its own side, it is not like that in reality. In reality there is no such snake there. It doesn't exist at

all.

Let us proceed further in the example. Now, the piece of rope is a collection of hairs. What is there is a collection of hairs that is put together. Its function is to tie things. On seeing this phenomena which performs that function, the mind makes up the label "rope." Seeing that particular phenomena makes the mind decide on the particular label "rope," to choose that particular label "rope." So the mind which sees that BASE, that phenomena, makes up the LABEL "rope." The mind just decides like that, just thinks like that - you just create the idea, just make up the label.

¢(i.e. It is just a convention. We are used to call this arrangement a rope. Just because we use this arrangement to tie thing with that. We also use the same label for other kind of arrangements that have a similar function. And we can use a different name for this arrangement if we want to use it for something else. The naming is arbitrary, conventional. There is nothing absolute about it. There is no real rope per se; it is just a name given to this aggregate of things assembled together. There is no "real" rope existing without a mind calling this arrangement a rope. That is what it meant by "the rope is empty of inherent existence". But we forget this and after a while we think there is such a thing as a real rope there. That is the hallucination, the object to be refuted. -- This reasoning apply to any object, to each part composing the object, to each part of those parts, etc, to each atoms, to each sub-atomic particles, to causality space and time, to space itself, to everything, until nothing is left on its own.)

Just from this, you can understand that there is really no rope there. There is no rope on that base, on that collection of hairs that has been put together. Rope is not there. "There" means "on the base" - on that base, that particular phenomena, the collection of hairs used to tie things.

After the mind labels "rope," and merely imputes "rope," then by not being aware that it is MERELY LABELED BY THE MIND, it appears back to your mind as rope. And when it appears back, it doesn't appear as merely labeled by your mind. It appears back to your mind as though it exists from its own side. Remember earlier how "snake" appears back to the mind after one puts the label. It is exactly the same here - another hallucination, another false view.

In this perception, how the rope appears back to you, THERE IS A BIG PILE OF HALLUCINATIONS. All the false views, the objects to be refuted, as pointed out by the different schools of philosophy, from the Chittamatrin school to the Madhyamika schools (the Madhyamika-Svatantrika and the Madhyamika-Prasangika schools), all of these are piled up there. When the rope appears back to us, there is this big pile of hallucinations, from the very gross ones up to the very subtle ones.

When we are not aware, we believe all these different hallucinations that we have, all the false views on the object in our perception. We believe all these are completely true, one-hundred-percent true - all the false views, the objects to be refuted (in the way the rope appears), as pointed out by all these different schools of philosophy. When we are not aware, without studying Dharma, without meditating, without analyzing wrong views, we think all these are completely true.

L3: [B. Presentation of the conventional truths]

¢(i.e. THE AFFIRMATION OF DEPENDENT ORIGINATION, THE CONVENTIONAL TRUTHS

¢-- FIGHTING THE EXTREME OF NIHILISM --)

¢(It is NOT COMPLETELY NON-EXISTENT, but it is like it doesn't exist. The way it exist is extremely subtle.)

\ What really exists is what exists in mere name,
\ but that, for our mind, becomes non-existent.
\ What exists, for our mind, seems non-existent.
\ That which exists in mere name, merely labeled by mind,
\ is too SUBTLE and we don't notice it
\ - so for our mind it is like it's non-existent.
\ So the emptiness is like non-existent.
\ Emptiness exists, the rope is empty, but for our mind, it is like it doesn't exist.

¢(i.e. So what it is is extremely subtle. There's a very subtle and fine border line between the existent and non-existent, fine line like the sharp side of a razor blade, unbelievably subtle and fine. This is what the "I" is like. It is very subtle. The 'I' is completely empty of existing from its own side, like it doesn't exist.)

¢(i.e. Existence and non-existence form a duality.

¢-- The absolute truth is not existence, not non-existence,

¢-- not both, not neither.)

¢-- (Antidote 2 : D.O. fights Nihilism.)

¢(i.e. So it is clear, it is not because everything is empty of inherent existence, that everything is merely labeled by the mind, that nothing exist at all, that there is no base at all. That would be falling into nihilism. It is not because we should not accept everything as really existing, that we should reject everything as if non-existent at all. We have to stay away from both extremes of : accepting everything (realism), and rejecting everything (nihilism). That is the Middle Way.)

L3: [C. The object of refutation]

AND WHAT DOESN'T EXIST - all the false views that we have on the merely labeled rope, which are explained as false by the philosophical schools - all these which do not exist at all, we think are one-hundred-percent true. So, for our minds, what exists appears like it doesn't exist, and that which doesn't exist we think exists. So it is completely opposite. Reality and the way things appear to us, in everyday life, is totally opposite.

¢(i.e. There are many levels of understanding emptiness, many levels of interpretation, more and more subtle. What change is the type of dependence being studied, or the object of refutation being considered:)

-- While it is IMPERMANENT, a phenomenon appears as permanent;

-- while it DEPENDS ON THE PARTS, it appears existing alone;

-- while it is DEPENDENT ON CAUSES AND CONDITIONS, it appears existing with its own freedom;

-- and while it DEPENDS ON THE COLLECTIONS OF THE BASE AND THE CONTINUATION OF THAT, it

appears as a self-entity.

-- The rope appears as a self-entity.

-- Then, it appears to our hallucinatory mind to be independent of our mind, even though it is A CREATION OF ONE'S OWN MIND without an outside creator (coming from only the mind means there is no outside creator). According to the Mind-Only (Chittamatrin) school, it is the imprint left on the seventh consciousness, the base-of-all, being experienced out, manifesting into rope and into the consciousness which perceives that. But while the rope is existing like this, it appears back to one's own mind as though it is without DEPENDENCE ON THE MIND, without depending on the imprint that was left on the seventh consciousness and experienced out. Without depending on that, the rope appears to exist totally on its own side, which is a false view.

-- On top of that, there is the false view which is the object to be refuted according to the Madhyamika-Svatantrika school: while the rope is existing by way of an undefective mind, a valid mind, labeling that it exists, the rope appears as though it is without DEPENDENCE ON THE LABELING of an undefective mind. It appears totally existing from its own side.

-- Now we come to the very subtle hallucination, false view, and object to be refuted, according to the highest philosophical school, the Madhyamika-Prasangika school. The rope, even though it exists MERELY LABELED BY THE MIND, appears back to one's hallucinatory mind as though it is not just merely labeled by the mind, but something more than that, something beyond that. There appears something extra, slightly more than what is merely labeled by mind - something from there, something additional, something extra to what is merely labeled by the mind. (i.e. This last one is the ultimate understanding of emptiness.)

¢(i.e. So there are different levels of understanding dependent origination and emptiness, different level of refuting objects, different level of the wrong conception the root of samsara, according to the different schools.)

\ THIS VERY SUBTLE THING IS WHAT DOESN'T EXIST, WHAT IS NOT THERE.
\ (i.e. something extra to what is merely labeled by the mind)

\ It is something which doesn't exist on the rope,
\ the merely labeled rope.
\ This is the object to be refuted
\ according to the Prasangika school
\ - this very subtle hallucination, this slightly extra,
\ addition to what is merely labeled by the mind.

In reality THERE IS ONLY ONE EMPTINESS, the emptiness we have to realize to cut the root of samsara, the ignorance. And the emptiness which we have to realize so that we can be liberated from the entire suffering and its causes is this emptiness, not those previous ones. It is THIS EMPTINESS (AS EXPLAINED BY THE PRASANGIKA SCHOOL). We have to realize this very subtle hallucination, this false view, for what it is, and then see that it doesn't exist. It exists nowhere. It is empty. And we then have to realize this on the "I" and the aggregates.

So now, there's no rope on the base, the collection of hairs that, put together, can function to tie things. There's no rope there. But there is a rope on the road, on that spot, where there is this base, this collection of hairs put together. Where there is this, there is a rope, but there is no rope on this base, on this collection of hairs that is curled there. On that, there is no rope. You cannot find rope there.

¢(i.e. So there are different levels of dependent arising and emptiness, different level of refuting objects, different level of the wrong conception the root of samsara, according to the different schools.)

\ (i.e. It is important to see precisely the correct object of refutation.

\ The very subtle thing that is "NOT MERELY LABELED BY THE MIND".)

But there is rope on the road. So, what is not there? It is the merely labeled rope appearing back as a real one from there. The very subtle false view of the object to be refuted, according to the Prasangika school, arises when the rope appears back as though it is not merely labeled by mind. If it appears back merely labeled by mind, that is OK, that is correct - that is the truth, and is according to reality. But it appears back as though it is not merely labeled by mind. It is good to use this phrase: "NOT MERELY LABELED BY MIND." This will help you later to come to know the very subtle object to be refuted, the very subtle hallucination of the false view. That is what we have to realize is empty. Only then can we be liberated from samsara. However, to our hallucinatory mind, this rope appears not merely labeled by mind. But this is not there, this exists nowhere. Not only does this not exist on that base, the collection of hairs and how it's put together, it doesn't even exist on the road, on that spot. It exists nowhere in the world.

That rope, the merely labeled rope, appearing back as though it is not merely labeled by mind - this you can say is in your mind. It is not there, and it is not right.

L3: [D. Generalization to all dharma]

BUT JUST LIKE THIS, IN EXACTLY THE SAME WAY, THE "I" APPEARS. The merely labeled "I" appears not merely labeled by the mind, as though it is something real from there. But this is totally non-existent - it exists nowhere. It is totally empty.

And, as stated in the Heart Sutra, THE SAME APPLIES TO THE AGGREGATES, the body, the mind, everything that appears back not merely labeled by the mind, as well as form, sound, smell, taste, tangible objects, all the senses and all the sense objects, all the rest of the phenomena, the Four Noble Truths, the Twelve Links, all of which are merely labeled by the mind but appearing back not merely labeled by the mind. (i.e. In fact all the conventional truths, absolutely everything, all dharmas, are all empty of inherent existence.)

So ALL PHENOMENA that are merely labeled by the mind, appearing back to our mind as though they are not merely labeled by the mind - all this is totally hallucinatory, totally non-existent, totally empty. All this part of appearance, we can say, is just in the mind. Which is another way of presenting what is hallucination - by saying it is just in the mind, in your mind. It is one way of getting the idea, of getting the feeling of what is hallucination.

L3: [E. Importance of practicing this all the time / importance of constant awareness]

So when you go through the Heart Sutra, as you go through the different phenomena - aggregates and so forth - YOU SHOULD PRACTICE MINDFULNESS ON HOW EACH OBJECT APPEARS. When it comes to the "I", how the "I" appears to you; when it comes to the aggregates, how the

aggregates appear to you. So as you go through each subject, you look at your own perception and view of the object, and the way it is appearing - especially the way it is appearing back to you not merely labeled by the mind. And you can think: this doesn't exist. This, appearing this way, doesn't exist at all - it's just in the mind. Which means the hallucination doesn't exist. You can meditate like that.

¢(i.e. We should always be conscious, when perceiving something and recognizing it, that the label is just an arbitrary label given to a fuzzy arrangements or phenomena. The association we have made in our mind between the perceptions of this base and the label we have chose to give to it is purely arbitrary, and very fuzzy. -- And is the same even without verbal concepts. It is not because we use concepts that we suffer. Sentient beings that have no use of verbal concepts still build karma and suffer. It is the basic associative processes, the modeling processes, that are the basis of karma building. Even without using concepts, all perceptions are tainted by old karma. There is no raw, objective, impartial perceptions of any kind. All perceptions are conditioned. We should always be aware of that.)

It is like first recognizing your enemy.

¢(i.e. As soon as you think you are seeing something existing on its own, start the analyzing ... until you see clearly the object of refutation, then its emptiness. The problem is that it happen thousands of time every second. :-)

And as soon as you recognize your enemy, before the enemy cheats you, before the enemy destroys you, you destroy the enemy. So it is like this here.

-- LOOK at your own view of the object, that which appears not merely labeled by the mind, as though it is something appearing real from there;

-- and then by RECOGNIZING this, immediately think that it is hallucination, that it doesn't exist.

-- Then use the word "NO!" like an atomic bomb on the hallucination, on your object of ignorance.

-- See that it's empty.

THAT'S HOW YOU ELIMINATE AND CUT THE IGNORANCE, THE ROOT OF DELUSION, KARMA, AND ALL THE SUFFERING.

¢(i.e. It is just a matter of practicing this enough so that your mind can make the generalization, and do the process automatically without thinking. When your mind feel the bliss that comes with this kind of realizations, it will put itself at work without any pushing from you.

¢-- HHDL said "the root of all the disturbing negative minds is the grasping at true existence. ... Based on this grasping at true existence we develop all kinds of disturbing negative minds and create a great deal of negative karma". It is because everything is empty, and because we ignore this and grasp at our own creations, that there is the cycle of samsara, the Wheel of life, dependent origination, all suffering. Eliminating this ignorance is enough to transcend all suffering.)

(Teaching on emptiness by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, given on 23 March 1997, at Amitabha Buddhist Centre, Singapore)

L2: [Part 2]

(ABC Newsletter, Jul-Aug 97)

L3: [F. All dharma are merely imputed by the mind / the ultimate truth (generalized to all dharma)]

THE "I", ACTIONS, OBJECTS, AND ALL PHENOMENA ARE WHAT'S MERELY LABELED BY THE MIND. The "I" totally does not exist from its own side. It is empty. Action also totally does not exist from its own side. And the rest of the phenomena as well also totally do not exist from their own side. EVERYTHING IS EMPTY, LIKE SPACE.

When we think of "I" - I'm doing this, I'm doing that, I'm meditating, saying prayers, listening to the Dharma - this "I" is not appearing to one's own mind as merely labeled by the mind. It appears as something real, a real "I" from there. But it is not there. It is totally non-existent there, on this base, the association of the body and mind, or the collection of the five aggregates: form, feeling, discrimination, compound aggregates, consciousness - all of which are totally non-existent. The "I" is totally non-existent there, totally empty. It's just your own concept - it is not there. It is just your own projection or imagination. It looks like it is there but it is not there. This you can say, one hundred percent, is only in your mind. It's not there.

It is exactly the same when we think of THE AGGREGATES. Even though what they are are merely what are labeled by the mind, the aggregates do not appear to us to be merely labeled by the mind. They appear as something not merely labeled by the mind, which means they appear as something existing from their own side. The aggregates look like they are there, but they are not there. This is totally a hallucination, totally non-existent. It is just your own superstition. It is not there. It is just in your mind. It looks like it is there, it appears like it is there, but it is not there. It is totally empty, and non-existent there.

It is exactly the same when we look at this building, the lights, the ceiling, the walls, all the statues, the offerings, the flowers, the people here, the books, this microphone here. ALL THESE THINGS come from our mind, are merely labeled by our mind, but when it appears back to our mind, it doesn't appear as merely labeled. It doesn't even appear, to our hallucinatory mind, that it comes from the mind. It purely comes from the mind, but when it appears back to the mind, it doesn't even appear that way. Leave aside appearing merely labeled by the mind, it doesn't even appear to have come from the mind.

So you can see the big hallucination, huge gross hallucination, in our perception and view of things. Just by looking right here - the people, ceiling, walls, statues, offerings, lights, and so on. There are all these things there, like something not merely labeled by mind. Like something real appearing from there or something existing from its own side.

☿(i.e. Be convince that anytime you see a thing (or phenomena) around you, you are "visualizing" those things. The things you think are there, they are not there. It is the symptom of the sickness described by the Buddha. From this be convince that you still have a lot of work to do before being able to break the hallucination permanently. But again, the task is not to "reject" everything -- nor is it to continue to "accept" everything as they appear. The task is the Middle Way: not accepting, not rejecting. To do this we do both: use methods to understand the way our mind works, and develop the wisdom realizing emptiness.)

So when we do not analyze, when we do not meditate, when we are not aware of the nature of

phenomena, all this, starting from the "I" and the aggregates, looks like they are there, but they are not there. All these which look like they are there are totally hallucination. All these objects are to be refuted. All these, in the way we have realized them, are false phenomena - false "I", false aggregates, false light, false wall, false ceiling, false statue ... Not even the slightest atom of these exists. The slightest atom does not exist there, it exists nowhere.

It is like the following situation. Because of disease or drugs that affect the mind, or even by having yellow glass in front of your eyes, you see the snow mountain, which is white, as being yellow. Something affects the mind and makes you see the white snow mountain as yellow. There is the appearance of yellow, but it is not there. It is just your hallucinatory mind. It looks it is there but it is not there. It is exactly like the example I gave yesterday: the snake and then the rope appearing not merely labeled by the mind.

¢(i.e. So everything is dependent on the mind perceiving them. All perceptions are tainted by past karma. We have imagined models, associations, invariants, concepts to try to make sense of the world. But none of those fabrications are absolutes. Even the smallest animal build habits based on elementary associations, trying to predict the future, to control its environment. Perceptions are like habits. They could be useful as skilful means, but none of them is absolute, none of them is really existing independently of the mind perceiving them.)

All these things that we see right here now - the people, building, lights, offerings, statues - all these appearing not merely labeled by the mind. They are like the yellow colour appearance in the example. You believe it is there, but the yellow colour is caused by the yellow glass, the drugs, the bile disease, or the hallucinatory mind. It is like that. So all these that you see right here now is not there. They look like they are there but they are not there. So you can say that all these are in the mind. This you can definitely say is in your mind. Just in your mind. Just superstition, one hundred per cent superstition. Because they do not exist. All these do not exist.

We can use the term "superstition" to give an idea of ignorance. Even though the superstitious mind, which is ignorant, believe and apprehend phenomena in that way, it is something that is not true - which is normally what we mean by superstition. It is exactly the same here. Therefore, in reality, all these phenomena - statues, ceiling, walls, lights, offerings - all these things are empty. Everything is empty, including subject "you", subject "I" - all are empty. Empty like space.

¢(i.e. All of those fabrications we have build to make sense of the world are not absolute. If they stop you from progressing, they are no better than what we call superstitions, or mind fixations. They are all empty of inherent existence.)

L3: [G. But that does not mean that all dharma are non-existent (affirmation of the conventional truths)]

¢(i.e. THE AFFIRMATION OF DEPENDENT ORIGINATION, THE CONVENTIONAL TRUTHS
¢-- fighting the extreme of nihilism --)

\ BUT ALL THIS DOESN'T MEAN THEY DON'T EXIST.
\ THEY EXIST IN MERE NAME.

While being empty of existing from their own side, they exist in mere name. Even the mind exists in mere name. Mind which is labeled exists in mere name. The base also exists in mere name. So everything, the subject, the mind, the base which you label, exist in mere name. So the whole of phenomena, whatever exists, exists in mere name. Everything exists in mere name, being merely labeled by the mind. Because of that, everything is empty of existing from their own side.

¢(i.e. We should not make emptiness an absolute truth. To have emptiness we need something to be empty. Emptiness does not exist independently of the conventional truths. And vice versa, the conventional truths do not exist without emptiness. The two, conventional truths and emptiness, are not separate. But they are not the same either. So emptiness is also a concept, a conventional truths. It is not the Ultimate Vision of Everything. It is just a tool, an antidote, to fight too much realism.)

¢(It is almost like, it is not non-existent, it is not completely nonexistent, but it is like non-existence. It is like it does not exist. It is not non-existent because you can use it. But all this is mere concept, all this is concept, the mind believe, the mind label, the mind believe, it is not the table is in the mind, but the mind believe.

¢-- Like non-existent. So it is not non-existent because I can abandon the cause of suffering, I can create the cause of happiness, I can do many things, benefit others, stop harm. Because of the aggregates it is not non-existent, it is like non-existent.

¢-- So every thing exists by depending on the base. Nothing you can find on the base. But things exist by depending on the base. So that is important to know. So like that is dependent arising. Extremely subtle, how the table exists, how I exist, the way I am talking now that it becomes so fine, almost that it doesn't exist, that is the Prasangika's view. That is why it is so difficult, why it is so easy to fall into nihilism, eternalism, so easy to fall into nihilism. Why? Because it is so subtle. So by meditating on the meaning of dependent arising then one can realize the unmistakable emptiness depending on the basis and the thought. The subtle dependent arising.)

AS AN EXAMPLE, WHAT IS LABELED "A" cannot be found on the design of the letter "A". The label "A" cannot be found on the drawing of "A" - you cannot find "A" on this line, you cannot find "A" on that line. Even all together, on this, you cannot find the "A". You have merely labeled "A", you cannot find "A" there. "A" which is labeled by your mind cannot be found there.

L3: [H. The way the illusion of the table is created / the way the mind works]

AS ANOTHER EXAMPLE, THIS PART OF THE TABLE here is only part of the table - so it is not table. And this top part, this top is also part of the table, so it is not table. So any piece is only part of the table, and because it is only part of the table, it is not table. Even all the parts together, that's not table, because that is the base.

¢(i.e. THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE ILLUSION:)

\ The mind first sees that BASE,
\ all the parts of the table put together,
\ and only then LABELS "table."

¢(i.e. So first comes the BASE, and then after that, secondly, the LABEL. You do not see them together. These two are not the same, nor separate.)

\ Only after the mind has imputed the LABEL "table,"
 \ then you SEE TABLE.
 \ Believing the label "table,"
 \ there is then the appearance of table,
 \ and one sees table.
 \ Only then, one sees that this is table.

This occurs in steps: first the mind sees all the parts of the table put together (which is like the cause, the reason), and then after that, that same mind makes up the label "table." SO FIRST COMES THE BASE, AND THEN AFTER THAT, SECONDLY, THE LABEL "TABLE." First you see the base, and only after that, you see the label "table". You do not see them together. There is no way of seeing them together. First the mind sees the base, which then becomes the reason for the same mind to choose the particular specific label "table". Only after the mind has imputed the label "table," then you see table. Believing the label "table," there is then the appearance of table, and one sees table. Only then, one sees that this is table. (i.e. you believe in the true existence of your own created labels / names / concepts)

¶(i.e. What is explained here with the labeling process is the same with the more general concept of establishing associations -- the basic building process of the brain --, or imagining scientific or non-scientific theories. All of this is describing the making of karma. The rest is in the history of dependent origination, the Wheel of life. It is because we think those things are really existing on their own that we have feelings, clinging, grasping, ... birth, suffering, death, rebirth ... It is because we are grasping at inherent existence that we suffer. It is this ignorance of the true nature of everything, emptiness, that is the root cause of all suffering.)

So seeing table has to come after your mind has labeled "table." THEREFORE IT IS CLEAR THAT THE BASE IS NOT TABLE. The base is the object to be labeled table. THE BASE AND THE LABEL ARE DIFFERENT PHENOMENA. (i.e. We have given a name to a bunch of fuzzy arrangements of stimuli; we are betting that it is what we usually call by that name. But it has always been just an arbitrary name, a conventional name. The thing is not really there.) The base, parts of the table put together, and the label "table" - these two are different phenomena. THEY ARE NOT SEPARATE BUT THEY ARE DIFFERENT PHENOMENA. So even the merely labeled table, what exists, is what is merely labeled by the mind. But even this merely labeled table, even this, does not exist on the base - the parts of the table that is put together. Even the merely labeled table, you cannot find - it does not exist.

¶(i.e. The base and the label are like cause and effect. And, following the Karikas, they are not different, not the same. One cannot exist without the other. They are interdependent. One implies the other. They are not separate; but they are not the same either.) (Note: The wording is different than usual here. Instead of saying "they are not different, not the same", the author says "they are not separate". And instead of saying "they are not the same", the author says "they are different".)

So even the table, what exists, is merely labeled by the mind. But even that, you cannot find on this base of the table, the parts of the table put together. So now, HOW CAN WE FIND THE INHERENTLY EXISTENT TABLE? NO WAY. The table appearing to us not merely labeled by the mind, or the table appearing as a real table from there, this table existing from its own side - there is no way we can find this on the base of the table, the pieces or parts of the

table put together. There is no way of finding this. Already the table that exists cannot be found on this base. How then are we going to find the table which doesn't exist - the "inherently existent" table - on this base?

In our view, it may appear that there is table on this base, the parts of the table that are put together. If, in your perception, there is a table on this base to be labeled, if you see that there is table on that which is the parts of the table put together, THAT ITSELF IS THE OBJECT TO BE REFUTED. That itself is the false table, the table which doesn't exist.

The inherently existing table, or table existing from its own side - this and your seeing table on the base of the table is the same, exactly the same. When we do not understand well, we may say that the inherently existent table is not there, but there is table on this base. We might think that - there should be table on this base. Also it is possible that you may make the mistake that the mind is labeling table on the base.

L3: [Questions / Answers]

Rinpoche (asking student): So, anyway, is there table on the base, or not? Does the table exist on the base or not?

Student (Mr Sin): It exists as a dependent arising on the base. (i.e. Seems like the student thinks that there is a table that has originated dependently on some conditions. He thinks there is origination, existence, and cessation.)

Rinpoche: So there is a table on the base, right? So you can find table on the base.

Student: Table arises in dependence on the base and your own perception. That is what is seen.

Rinpoche: By which mind? By wisdom or by ignorance?

Student: By ignorance. By ignorance, it is seen as an independent arising.

Rinpoche: OK, that's good. So, in the reality, is there table on the base of the table or not?

Student: Ultimately, there is no table. The table itself is a phenomena that arises because of the base, so it doesn't exist independently.

Rinpoche: Yes, that is correct, it doesn't exist independently. So there is table on the base or there is no table on the base?

Student: To say yes is not quite true, but to say no is also not quite true.

Rinpoche: I've never heard that special answer. (general laughter) That's a very special answer.

Student: What I say has to be elaborated - why you say yes there is and why you say no there isn't. No there isn't if you think there is an independent existence, but yes there is if it is a dependent arising.

Rinpoche: So does the dependent table exist on the base of the table or not?

Student: By definition, it does.

Rinpoche: So the dependent table exists on the base of the table. So you can find the dependent table on the base of the table. There is a dependent table on the base of the table, yes?

Student: Yes ...

Rinpoche (laughing): So you show me now. You show me where it is. (general laughter) Show me the dependent table on this base. Where is it?

Student: Inside the table it cannot be found, but it is something which is perceived as being there.

Rinpoche: Really? So is that false or is that true?

Student: Maybe, let me ask you ... (general laughter)

Rinpoche: Does it exist or not? Make it simple. Does it exist or not?

Student: Let's say you ask someone: "Does a mirage exist or not?" From the senses it exist, but when you look at it carefully it does not exist. So the table is just like a mirage. You see it, it seems to exist, you can say that it exists, but it is just a phenomenon. But when you want to look at it directly, actually it doesn't exist. So similarly the dependent table that one sees is like a mirage.

Rinpoche: So you say, according to perception, it exists there. Is that what you are saying?

Student: It is basically identical to a mirage. If you say a mirage exists, it is because you see it. You see it as existing, but a mirage doesn't really exist.

Rinpoche: Mirage doesn't exist?

Student: It doesn't exist, yes, but you can still see it.

Rinpoche: Mirage doesn't exist? Dream doesn't exist? So hallucination doesn't exist.

Student: We're talking about two different things. One is talking about experience. I'm talking about whether ultimately it exists or not.

Rinpoche (laughing): No, first we finish this one. You say mirage doesn't exist. So does hallucination exist?

Student: Hallucination of something ... that something doesn't exist, but you still have an experience.

Rinpoche: So hallucination does exist.

Student: Only through experience, but the things that you hallucinate about don't exist.

Rinpoche: Yes, when you are having a hallucination, that object doesn't exist. That I fully agree with you. There's no question, no doubt. But does hallucination exist or not?

Student: That itself is also a dependent arising.

Rinpoche: So it exists ... because of dependent arising.

Student: Dependently on various causes and conditions.

Rinpoche: Yes, so it exists ...

Student: Only on that basis.

Rinpoche (laughing): So it exists or not? (general laughter)

Student: When you say it exists, you must also say why it exists. When you say just a yes or no answer, it doesn't give a clear picture of why yes or no.

Rinpoche (laughing): No, first I want to know yes or no, then comes the why. (general laughter) Then you can explain. If I ask why, then you can explain. But this is not what I am expecting first. What I am expecting is yes or no.

Student: OK, then I say no.

Rinpoche: So nobody has hallucination? Hallucination doesn't exist. So no sentient being has hallucination.

Student: Because there are no sentient beings anyway.

Rinpoche (laughing): So there's no sentient beings, no suffering ... there's no Four Noble Truths. Then it comes to a point where nothing exists.

Student: That's not what I am trying to say. Sentient beings don't exist other than as a conventional point of view, not on an ultimate point of view.

Rinpoche: Ultimate point of view - that means emptiness. Is that what you are saying?

Student: Yes.

Rinpoche: That's not my question. (general laughter)

Student: Then I gave the wrong answer to the wrong question.

Rinpoche: When somebody ask you: "Do you have a nose?" Then you say: "Oh, ultimately no nose." (general laughter) Or somebody ask you: "Are you hungry?" "Oh, ultimately no." (more laughter)

Rinpoche (after a pause): Anyway, does your nose exist or not?

Student: Which answer would you like? (uproarious general laughter)

Rinpoche (laughing): I like simple answer: yes or no.

(to be continued)

(Teaching on emptiness by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, given on 24 March 1997, at Amitabha Buddhist Centre, Singapore)

L2: [Part 3]

(ABC Newsletter, Sep-Oct 97)

L3: [I. Some warnings against dualism]

Using the term "on the base" may give the misconception, the belief, that there is table on the base. The phrase "mind labeling on the table" might give the misconception that there is table on the base. Actually, THE APPEARANCE THAT THERE IS TABLE ON THE BASE - THAT ITSELF IS

THE OBJECT TO BE REFUTED. According to the highest philosophical school, the Madhyamika Prasangika school, that is the very subtle object to be refuted.

¢(i.e. We are not putting a real label on a real table, or base. They are not both existing and joined in the act of labeling. Dualism is also not the absolute truth. Nothing has originated on the base. There is no whole born out of the parts.)

Apprehending that there is table on the base - THAT ITSELF IS IGNORANCE. According to the Prasangika school, that is ignorance - the mind not knowing the ultimate nature of the table: while there is no table on the base, apprehending that there is table on the base; while the table is empty of existing from its own side, apprehending that it exists from its own side.

¢(i.e. We are not giving the name "table" to a table -- or whatever one may call it. The table does not originate first, and, then seeing it, we label it "table". That may be what we think, but that is not the way it happen. There is no table on the base, no table originating, we are not labeling a table. The has never been a table, never is, never will be a table.)

L3: [J. Synonyms for the object of refutation]

According to the Prasangika school,

--- the perception of an inherently existing table, a not-merely-labeled table, a table which has existence from its own side,

--- and the perception that there is table on the base,

is the same. They are exactly the same. Both are hallucination. Both mean the same thing. Both do not exist.

--- The table on the base,

--- and the inherently existing not-merely-labeled table on the base both are nonexistent. Both are referring to the same thing.

Here is THE DIFFERENCE (which is very important) BETWEEN THE MADHYAMIKA PRASANGIKA SCHOOL AND THE MADHYAMIKA SVATANTRIKA SCHOOL.

-- THE SVATANTRIKA SCHOOL'S VIEW is that although table is labeled by mind, it also exists from its own side. That is what their philosophers believe. So according to the Svatantrika school, there is table on the base - you can find table on the base. That is the philosophy of the Svatantrika school. (i.e. They think we are labeling a table. Everything is interdependent, but existing.)

-- However, according to THE PRASANGIKA SCHOOL, even the merely labeled table cannot be found. Even the merely labeled table doesn't exist on the base of the table. Therefore you can say there is no table on the base.

Through analysis, through meditation, you can realize this and come to the point where you don't see any table on the base. Through your own meditation, through your own analysis, the conclusion will come to this. So whether it is true or not, the way to discover it is through your own meditation, and through your own analysis. It is like tasting honey, how it is sweet - when you actually take it that's when you discover it. It is similar to this.

So you can see the difference in the views of the two schools - the Madhyamika Svatantrika

and the Madhyamika Prasangika. And this is extremely important, the difference between these two, their different understanding, their different views. It helps to make things very clear in your mind.

L3: [K. Warning against monism]

¢i.e. (THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE ILLUSION:)

Now, here is THE REASON WHY WE SEE PHENOMENA, INCLUDING THE "I", IN A FALSE WAY, the reason

why we are blocked from seeing phenomena according to reality, according to what they are - that which exist in mere name, and therefore empty from their own side. That is the reality, and what blocks us from seeing things that way is:

- \ the mistake which arises because
- \ WE CANNOT DIFFERENTIATE THE BASE AND THE LABEL.
- \ We cannot differentiate the base and the label in our mind.
- \ In our perception, those two are mixed.

¢(i.e. We think there is a table, because we are using the label "table". We think we are giving the label "table" to an already existing table. We think we have a pure perception of a table.

¢-- This is like, from the case of the duality cause & effect, thinking that the cause and the effect are the same. In fact, they are not separate, but not the same. Most of the time, when dealing with dualities, we adopt dualism. But here we adopt monism / oneness. Very interesting.

¢-- We think that the cause (the base) and the effect (the label) are linked in an absolute causality, a one to one absolute link. That if we have this base, then there is this label; and if we have this label it is because we have this base. This is assuming direct pure perception and recognition; the Plato's philosophy of essences. But all causalities are empty. There is never perfect control between cause and effect. There is always other conditions, other effects. it is the same here.

¢-- We think that the base cannot have any other label, that this base is that label; that the cause always produce the same effect, that the cause is absolute. But all causes are empty. No cause is absolute because causes have conditions of their own, and this ad infinitum.

¢-- We think that the label cannot apply to anything else; that the effect is absolute. That if we have this effect it is because we had this precise cause. But all effects are empty.

¢-- ... analysis to be continued ...

¢-- In short, there is no absolute causality between the base and the label.)

Ling Rinpoche, the elder tutor of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, used to explain the refuting object (that which we have to realize is empty) in this way. Rinpoche said that THE DEFINITION OF THE REFUTING OBJECT IS AN OBJECT (LIKE THE TABLE) APPEARING UNDIFFERENTIABLE

WITH REGARDS TO THE BASE AND THE LABEL. Like the table appearing with the base and the label

undifferentiated. "Undifferentiated with the base and the label" - that is how Rinpoche explained it. And this has great meaning. It is another way of presenting what the problem is: the table appearing, in our view, with the base and the label "table" undifferentiated.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama, used to express it, slightly differently, in this way: the label "table" appears mixed in the base. Kind of like inside of this, inside the base.

L3: [L. The right way to see this : not realism, not nihilism, not dualism, not monism]

Now we go back to what Mr Sin said.

-- Mr Sin said that there is no independent table, but there is a dependent table on the base. What Mr Sin is saying is that the inherently existing table is not on the base but the merely labeled table is there, on the base. That's what he is saying. (i.e. He think there is a table being labeled "table". But in fact the table does not exist before, or independently of, being labeled "table".)

-- However, in the view of the Prasangika school, the merely labeled table on the base (that which we have to realize is empty) doesn't exist. So that becomes the obstacle. Even apprehending that there is a merely labeled table on the base becomes the obstacle. Apprehending this way, that is ignorance: while there is no merely labeled table on the base, believing that there is a merely labeled table on the base. In the view of the Prasangika school, apprehending even a merely labeled table as existing on the base is the object to be refuted, the object that has to be realized is empty. As it is empty, in reality.

-- If you are seeing that there is a table on the base means you are seeing an inherently existing table. There's no way to see table on the base, no way to perceive the table as appearing on the base, without it appearing inherently existing. That's what it means.

Therefore I normally choose to present it this way: "the mind makes up the label table relating to the base of the table." In this way there is no confusion, this way it becomes very clear. The phrase "putting the label on the base" might give people, who do not have good understanding, the wrong idea that there is table on the base. Mind merely imputes the label "table" relating it to the base.

¢(i.e. THE UNION OF EMPTINESS AND DEPENDENT ORIGINATION)

- \ What the table is now becomes very subtle.
- \ It is empty of existing from its own side.
- \ It exists but it is empty.
- \ While the table is existing,
- \ at the same time,
- \ it is empty of existing from its own side.

¢(i.e. It is not existing independently; it is not non-existent at all.)

¢(i.e. SEE EVERYTHING AS AN ILLUSION)

- \ SO PRACTICE THIS MINDFULNESS,
- \ SEEING THE FALSE OBJECT AS FALSE,
- \ AND THAT WHICH IS HALLUCINATION AS HALLUCINATION.
- \ IT IS POSSIBLE TO LIVE LIFE WITH THIS MEDITATION CONTINUOUSLY.
- \ That gives you an idea of what the truth is. With this, with

\ awareness of the ultimate nature of phenomena,
\ all the delusions - anger, attachment, pride, jealousy –
\ all these delusions do not make any sense.

\ It is the most powerful remedy because it is the belief that the problem is real,
\ real in the sense of existing from its own side,
\ that makes the mind very depressed, unhappy and so forth.

\ When one thinks of the truth
\ - that they are just labeled, and are all empty -
\ that then keeps up one's spirit, and doesn't bring one right down.

The "I", the aggregates, and all these objects here - the people, the holy objects, the ceiling, the walls, the lights - every phenomenon that we look at looks like it is there, there on the base. All these in reality are not there. All these are superstition, hallucination. It is just in your mind. It is not there. It doesn't exist. So you should PRACTICE MINDFULNESS OF THIS.

Presenting it this way might help make it clear: it is just your concept, just your superstition, just in your mind. It is not there, all these things are not there even though it appears there. Therefore all these, including the subject "I", and all the rest of the phenomena, are empty. Empty, not existing from its own side. So similarly, when you are on the road, or at home, or in the office, every object appearing like it's there on the base, like it's not merely labeled by the mind, like it's existing from its own side - every single thing, including yourself, your own "I", and all the objects - everything appearing like it is there, everything there, all these are superstition and hallucination. It is not there, nothing is there. So all these things do not exist. It exists in mere name, by depending on the base and on thought - labeling. But even the mind itself which labels, even that exists in mere name. Even the base exists in mere name. Similarly, all the rest of the phenomena, all exist in mere name. Therefore they are empty of existing from their own side.

SO PRACTICE THIS MINDFULNESS, SEEING THE FALSE OBJECT AS FALSE, AND THAT WHICH IS HALLUCINATION AS HALLUCINATION. Then, only then, will you be able to discriminate between what is true and what is false. Only then will your mind be able to distinguish the truth from the false. When you practice the mindfulness that false is false, hallucination is hallucination, that gives you an idea of what the truth is. But when you don't meditate, when you don't practice mindfulness of seeing what is false as false, then you do not notice what the truth is, and you are not aware of it.

Then, when one is unable to differentiate between what is the truth and what is false, this becomes the basis of all the problems of life. It becomes THE ROOT OF SAMSAARA, the root of the unimaginable sufferings, the oceans of the six realms' suffering, the oceans of the human beings' problems. When facing criticism, or when badly treated, one gets so upset, so angry. And when one gets some disease, some pain, without a quick recovery, it is so unbearable. In addition there is the incredibly painful relationship problems lasting for years, the pain in the heart. These oceans of human beings' problems come from the mind being ignorant, being unable to realize the false, and then because of that, being unable to realize the truth, the ultimate nature. Not knowing what is the truth and what is false - this is the root of all the problems, all the undesirable sufferings of samsara.

Therefore this meditation becomes the practice of mindfulness in this - that what is false

is false, what is hallucination is hallucination. IT IS POSSIBLE TO LIVE LIFE WITH THIS MEDITATION CONTINUOUSLY. Not only during the meditation session but even during working time, and especially when there is danger of the mind getting depressed, upset or angry, when there is danger of engaging in negative karma. Especially at those times, this meditation - seeing that the things, including "I", actions, objects, appearing to oneself are not true, but false. Seeing that they are false becomes an extremely powerful solution, the remedy. This way then, there is no basis for delusion to arise. No reason for any delusion to arise.

SO WITH THIS, WITH AWARENESS OF THE ULTIMATE NATURE OF PHENOMENA, ALL THE DELUSIONS - ANGER, ATTACHMENT, PRIDE, JEALOUSY - ALL THESE DELUSIONS DO NOT MAKE ANY SENSE. It's nonsense, childish nonsense. All these thoughts are nonsense when you practice mindfulness in the nature of the phenomena.

There is one old lady in England, a member of the London general centre, who said that, when she was depressed and when things were not happening the way she would like, she would think of how everything is merely labeled by the mind or that the way things appear, the situations, are empty. She would then feel good, feel alright, and not be depressed and sad. When she thinks in this way, she feels free and peaceful. It is like that. So some people use the meditation on emptiness at the time when they meet problems. It is excellent, and is one of the most powerful remedies if one can think this.

IT IS THE MOST POWERFUL REMEDY because it is the belief that the problem is real, real in the sense of existing from its own side, that makes the mind very depressed, unhappy and so forth. When one thinks of the truth - that they are just labeled, and are all empty - that then keeps up one's spirit, and doesn't bring one right down.

(Teaching on emptiness by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, given on 24 March 1997, at Amitabha Buddhist Centre, Singapore)

L1: [Résumé 1 (added section)]

-- We think things really exist on their own, that we perceive things directly, that there is pure perception. That is realism. But we should not accept that as an absolute truth.

-- Everything is empty of inherent existence, merely labeled by the mind. That is the Ultimate Truth.

-- But that does not mean that they do not exist at all. We should not reject everything because they are empty. That would be nihilism. Emptiness is also empty. We should not accept the Ultimate Truth as an absolute truth either.

-- We should not think that things exist and are empty. Or that things exist and change. Or that things have real origination, duration and cessation. Or that we put real labels on real things. That is dualism.

-- And we should not think that reality and emptiness are the same. That dependent origination and emptiness are the same. That the base and the label are the same. That we have real direct perception of the essence of things. That is oneness / monism.

-- The Middle Way is not accepting any of those four extreme positions, and not rejecting

them either.

-- The way things exist is very subtle. The absolute truth is beyond words, beyond all karma formation.

L3: [The Ultimate / Sacred Truth : Emptiness: fighting the extreme of realism]

-- Nothing really exist the way we thing they are. Things are not "existing" on their own.

-- We are not objectively seeing things. There is no pure perception. All perceptions are conditioned by past karma.

-- We are not putting the label "table" on an already existing table. There is no table without a label.

-- Everything is merely labeled by the mind. Therefore nothing exists from its own side.

-- All conventional truths, including dependent origination, are empty.

L3: [The various (progressive) understanding of emptiness:]

-- not permanent

-- dependent on its parts

-- dependent on causes and conditions

-- dependent on the collections of the base and the continuation of that

-- not a self-entity

-- dependent of our mind

-- dependent on the labeling of an undefective mind or not existing from its own side

-- just merely labeled by the mind

-- leaving nothing that is "not merely labeled by the mind"

L3: [The correct object of negation:]

-- that which is not just merely labeled by the mind, but something more than that, something beyond that.

-- if you see that there is table on that which is the parts of the table put together, that itself is the object to be refuted

-- the appearance that there is table on the base - that itself is the object to be refuted

-- the perception of an inherently existing table, a not-merely-labeled table, a table which has existence from its own side, and the perception that there is table on the base, is the same. They are exactly the same. Both are hallucination. Both mean the same thing. Both do not exist.

-- even the merely labeled table cannot be found

-- Ling Rinpoche said that the definition of the refuting object is an object (like the table) appearing undifferentiable with regards to the base and the label.

L3: [The conventional truths : Dependent Origination ... / very subtle: fighting the extreme of nihilism]

-- But all this doesn't mean they don't exist at all. Things are not "non-existent" either.

-- But all this doesn't mean they don't exist. They exist in mere name.

-- Everything exists in mere name, being merely labeled by the mind. Because of that, everything is empty of existing from their own side.

-- There is no label without a table. No emptiness without something to be empty. Emptiness itself is empty, a concept. Emptiness is not the absolute truth.

-- What the table is now becomes very subtle. It is empty of existing from its own side. It exists but it is empty. While the table is existing, at the same time, it is empty of

existing from its own side.

-- (It is not completely non-existent, but it is like it doesn't exist. The way it exist is extremely subtle.)

-- (So what it is is extremely subtle. There's a very subtle and fine border line between the existent and non-existent, fine line like the sharp side of a razor blade, unbelievably subtle and fine. This is what the "I" is like. It is very subtle. The 'I' is completely empty of existing from its own side, like it doesn't exist.)

L3: [The way the illusion is built:]

-- We think we are putting the label "table" on the already existing table. But that is not the case.

-- The mind first sees that base, all the parts of the table put together, and only then labels "table." Only after the mind has imputed the label "table," then you see table.

-- Believing the label "table," there is then the appearance of table, and one sees table. Only then, one sees that this is table.

-- So first comes the base, and then after that, secondly, the label. You do not see them together.

-- Therefore it is clear that the base is not table.

-- The base and the label are different phenomena. They are not separate but they are different phenomena. These two are not the same, nor separate.

-- the mistake which arises because we cannot differentiate the base and the label. We cannot differentiate the base and the label in our mind. In our perception, those two are mixed.

L3: [See everything as an illusion:]

-- The way things appear to one's hallucinatory mind is not true.

-- So practice this mindfulness, seeing the false object as false, and that which is hallucination as hallucination.

-- It is possible to live life with this meditation continuously.

-- That gives you an idea of what the truth is.

-- With this, with awareness of the ultimate nature of phenomena, all the delusions - anger, attachment, pride, jealousy - all these delusions do not make any sense.

-- It is the most powerful remedy because it is the belief that the problem is real, real in the sense of existing from its own side, that makes the mind very depressed, unhappy and so forth. When one thinks of the truth - that they are just labeled, and are all empty - that then keeps up one's spirit, and doesn't bring one right down.

L3: [The duality base vs. label: (advanced analysis based on the Karikas of Nagarjuna)]

-- The base (the thing we think we are labeling) and the label are like cause & effect, like dependent origination & emptiness, like conventional truths & Ultimate Truth, like existence & non-existence.

-- Antidote to REALISM (Affirming the independent existence of base (like independent of the mind perceiving it)). The base cannot exist independently of the label. There is no table before being labeled "table". There is no cause without an effect. Everything is empty of inherent existence. Everything is merely labeled by the mind. Form implies emptiness.

-- Antidote to IDEALISM / NIHILISM (Affirming that everything is non-existent because merely labeled by the mind, because empty (like everything is from the mind only)). The label cannot exist independently of the base. There is no label "table" without a base. There is

no effect without a cause. Emptiness is a concept, is empty. Emptiness implies form.

-- Antidote to DUALISM (Affirming that there is the union of the base and the label which were previously separate (like the concept and the essence are two separate things)). The base and the label are not separate, do not exist simultaneously and independently. We are not applying a real label to a real base. The cause & the effect are not both existing independently of each other, not separate. Conventional truths and emptiness are not separate, different. Form and emptiness are not separate or different.

-- Antidote to MONISM / ONENESS (Affirming that the base and the label are ONE, the same (like the concept is the very essence of the thing) (We cannot differentiate the base and the label in our mind. In our perception, those two are mixed.)) The base and the label are not the same. (We should not see them together as the same.) The label "table" and the base are not the same. The base is not table. The cause & the effect are not the same. Conventional truths and emptiness are not the same. Form and emptiness are not the same.

L3: [The Union of The Two truths: what is the absolute truth then ?]

-- Tetralemma: Not thinking a table exist independently of, or before, the labeling; not thinking it is just a name with no base; not thinking that it is a real name put on a real base/table (the two existing separately); not thinking that the base and the name are the same (confusing the label and the base).

-- Tetralemma: It is not existent (or conventional truths, or dependent origination); it is not non-existent (or Ultimate Truth, or emptiness); it is not both (they are not separate); it is not neither (they are not the same).

-- Tetralemma: Negating the four extremes : realism, nihilism, dualism and monism. Without affirming anything.

-- Dharmadhatu: What the absolute truth is is beyond all views, all dualities, all conceptualization, all karma building.

-- Transcendence: What we have to do is to transcend the duality base vs. label; not accepting the four extreme positions as absolute; not rejecting them as possible skilful means.

L3: [Note:]

-- All of this could be very easily generalized to understand how we build karma and suffer because of it. These explanations should not be thought as applying only to the conceptualization processes. It applies to all "actions", for all sentient beings, even those who do not have any capacity of communication. So the problem is not "labeling", "conceptualization" or "mentation", the problem is "volitional actions", "karma", or "any associative processes".

L1: [Résumé 2]

L3: [The recurring themes:]

-- Everything is merely labeled by the mind, empty of inherent existence. We should not accept things as they appear.

-- But emptiness does not mean that everything is non-existent, just coming from the mind only. We should not reject either.

-- Everything is empty because being dependent; dependent on parts, on cause & conditions,

on our mind. Everything is empty because dependently arisen. Everything is dependently arisen because empty. One implies the other.

-- We have to know very well the object of refutation before being able to see its emptiness.

-- Understanding the way the mind works, seeing it in action in the present, is liberating. It is when we understand how the mind works that we understand the real nature of everything, and that we become liberated from its illusions. Removing this ignorance is enough.

-- We are not putting a real label on a real base or table. They are not separate.

-- The label and the table should not be confused as being the same. There is no one-to-one absolute relation between the base and the label.

-- The base and the label form a duality like cause & effect. They are interdependent, not different, but not the same.

-- We have to be mindful all the time of the objects of refutation and their emptiness. (i.e. It is just a matter of practicing this until it becomes automatic, without thoughts, generalized to all dharma, including the self. It is a gradual deprogramming.)

L3: [Part 1]

L4: [A. Presentation of the Ultimate Truth / emptiness : fighting REALISM]

-- Everything is merely imputed by the mind.

-- Noting is inherently existing, on its own.

-- The things we think we are seeing are just visualizations.

--- "- all these are hallucinations."

--- Which means all these things do not exist.

--- "The way things appear to one's hallucinatory mind is not true."

-- The example of the piece of rope on the road

--- "The mind which sees that base, that phenomena, makes up the label "rope.""

--- "After the mind labels "rope," and merely imputes "rope," then by not being aware that it is merely labeled by the mind, it appears back to your mind as rope. And when it appears back, it doesn't appear as merely labeled by your mind. It appears back to your mind as though it exists from its own side."

--- "But there is no really no rope there, on the base."

L4: [B. Presentation of the conventional truths : fighting NIHILISM]

--- Emptiness does not mean non-existent.

--- It is not completely non-existent, but it is like it doesn't exist.

--- "The way it exist is extremely subtle."

-- [RESUME SO FAR] : COMPLEMENTARITY OF THE TWO TRUTHS

--- Everything is empty, merely labeled by the mind. But non non-existent.

--- This is the presentation of the Two Truths.

--- We need to understand both while in samsara. One fights realism of too much dependent origination or science. The other fights nihilism of too much emptiness, or rejection.

--- They form an apparent opposition, a duality. At the end we have to transcend both, to transcend the duality. But that does not mean to reject the duality. it means not accepting, not rejection; the Middle Way.

L4: [C. Clarification of the object of refutation :]

-- The understand emptiness we need to know exactly what everything is empty of. We cannot just reject everything.

-- There is a progression on the understanding of emptiness, the object of refutation goes more and more subtle as we progress.

-- Emptiness means dependently arisen. But the object to what it is dependent on is more and more subtle.

--- just impermanent

--- dependent on its parts

--- dependent on causes and conditions

--- dependent on the collections of the base and the continuation of that

--- dependent on anything else

--- dependent of our mind

--- dependent on the labeling of an undefective mind or not existing from its own side

--- just merely labeled by the mind

--- leaving nothing that is "not merely labeled by the mind"

-- "There appears something extra, slightly more than what is merely labeled by mind - something from there, something additional, something extra to what is merely labeled by the mind. This very subtle thing is what doesn't exist, what is not there."

-- "It is important to see precisely the correct object of refutation. The very subtle thing that is "not merely labeled by the mind"."

-- But be careful not to go too far and reject everything : "But there is rope on the road. So, what is not there? It is the merely labeled rope appearing back as a real one from there. The very subtle false view of the object to be refuted, according to the Prasangika school, arises when the rope appears back as though it is not merely labeled by mind. If it appears back merely labeled by mind, that is OK, that is correct - that is the truth, and is according to reality. But it appears back as though it is not merely labeled by mind."

L4: [D. Generalization to all dharmas]

-- The "I"

-- The five aggregates: the body, the mind

-- All phenomena

L4: [E. Importance of practicing this all the time / importance of constant mindfulness]

-- "That's how you eliminate and cut the ignorance, the root of delusion, karma, and all the suffering."

L3: [Part 2]

L4: [F. All dharmas are merely imputed by the mind / The Ultimate Truth generalized to all dharma]

-- "all this, starting from the "I" and the aggregates, looks like they are there, but they are not there. All these which look like they are there are totally hallucination. All these objects are to be refuted."

-- So everything is dependent on the mind perceiving them.

-- All perceptions are tainted by past karma.

-- There is no objective, pure perception. There is no raw perception, with or without karma.

-- All visualizations, like hallucinations, like superstitions.

L4: [G. But that does not mean that all dharmas are non-existent (affirming the conventional truths)]

-- "But all this doesn't mean they don't exist. They exist in mere name."

-- Everything implies emptiness. But emptiness implies everything.

-- The example of the letter "A".

-- The example of the table.

L4: [H. The way the illusion of the table is created / The way the mind works]

-- We think we perceive the table directly and know that it is called a table. We think there is a table there before we realize that it is there and find its name. But that is not the way it happen. That table that we think is there before the labeling, that is the object of refutation.

-- "The mind first sees that base, all the parts of the table put together, and only then labels "table." Only after the mind has imputed the label "table," then you see table. Believing the label "table," there is then the appearance of table, and one sees table. Only then, one sees that this is table."

-- "So first comes the base, and then after that, secondly, the label "table.""

-- "You do not see them together. There is no way of seeing them together."

-- "Therefore it is clear that the base is not table. The base and the label are different phenomena. The base, parts of the table put together, and the label "table" - these two are different phenomena. They are not separate but they are different phenomena."

-- Seeing how the mind works is enough to become free of its illusions and attachments to those.

L3: [Part 3]

L4: [I. Some warnings against dualism - fighting DUALISM]

-- We are not putting a real label on a real table, or base. They are not both existing and joined in the act of labeling.

-- Thinking things exist and are dependent is dualism.

L4: [J. Synonyms for the object of refutation]

-- an inherently existing table

-- a not-merely-labeled table

-- a table which has existence from its own side

-- the table on the base

L4: [K. Some warnings against monism - fighting MONISM]

-- "the mistake which arises because we cannot differentiate the base and the label. We cannot differentiate the base and the label in our mind. In our perception, those two are mixed (i.e. ONE)."

-- "the definition of the refuting object is an object (like the table) appearing undifferentiable with regards to the base and the label"

-- We think there is a table, because we are using the label "table".

-- We think we have a pure perception of a table.

L4: [L. The right way to see this: not realism, not nihilism, not dualism not monism]

-- "Therefore I normally choose to present it this way: "the mind makes up the label table relating to the base of the table." In this way there is no confusion, this way it becomes very clear."

-- "What the table is now becomes very subtle. It is empty of existing from its own side. It exists but it is empty. While the table is existing, at the same time, it is empty of existing from its own side."

-- So it is not existence, not non-existence, not both and not neither.

-- Meanwhile we should train ourself in seeing everything as just illusions.

-- "So practice this mindfulness, seeing the false object as false, and that which is hallucination as hallucination. It is possible to live life with this meditation continuously. That gives you an idea of what the truth is."

-- Simply removing this ignorance of the true nature of reality is enough to be able to drop all attachments, to reach Nirvana. If we know things are not really existing, as absolute desirable things, or absolute undesirable things, then we don't develop desire, attachment, hate, repulsion or indifference. That stops the whole cycle of the Wheel of life, no more karma building.

L3: [Conclusion]

-- It is knowing that everything is dependent on the mind perceiving them (dependently arisen), but not thinking that it is only coming from the mind (idealism or nihilism).

-- It is a matter of showing the absurdity of the four extreme positions : realism, nihilism, dualism and monism. Without proposing any other transcendental view. Transcending the four positions. Not accepting them, not rejecting them.

-- The Middle Way: not accepting, not rejecting.

-- Transcending the Tetralemma: it is not existence, not non-existence, not both, not neither.

-- Or as in the Heart Sutra: Form implies emptiness. Emptiness implies form. Form and emptiness are not different, or separate. But they are not the same either.

-- Beyond all dualities: Not opting for any side of an opposition, of a duality. Not accepting the opposition or the duality as real. Not rejecting the duality completely. Transcending all views, all dualities.

-- Using both method and wisdom: Using skilful means to create the proper environment, study the mind, and see through all of its own created illusions. Using methods (a raft), but knowing that all methods, all dharmas are empty of inherent existence. Using methods, but getting attached to them.

-- Learning dependent origination, designing an adapted path based on dependent origination, but knowing that all the elements are empty of inherent existence.

-- Not accepting reality (realism). Not rejecting reality (nihilism). The Middle Way.

-- Not discriminating (based on the idea of inherent existence), not non-discriminating (thinking everything is meaningless, or ONE). The Middle Way.

-- The absolute truth, the Buddha perspective, is beyond all views, beyond all dualities, beyond all conceptualization, beyond discrimination and non-discrimination, beyond causality space time, beyond all karma building.

[End]

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