

What is Reality?

Emptiness and Dependent Arising

The root cause of all our problems and difficulties is our misperception of reality. Whatever suffering we experience can be traced back to that misperception that ascribes phenomena a mode of existence that they cannot possibly possess. Therefore there is a disparity between the way phenomena exist in actuality and how we ordinarily perceive them to exist. In order to address this disparity Buddhism presents two truths:

1. Conventional truth
2. Ultimate truth

Ultimate truth is explained in order to present how phenomena *actually exist*, and conventional truth is explained in order to present the way in which we *ordinarily perceive* phenomena. Most Buddhist study and contemplation is directly or indirectly concerned with understanding these two truths. Buddhism therefore addresses the fundamental question of what reality is and how we can understand it.

The root of all our suffering is that we are caught in that disparity, for we perceive the opposite of what is actually there. Our reality, our daily life is made up of various different phenomena, situations and events. Some of them may be mere fantasies and not actually exist but the majority of them are existent functioning things. Though they exist, whenever we encounter those things our mind automatically ascribes to them a mode of existence or characteristic that they cannot possibly have.

Our habitual misperception of reality, especially on the subtlest level, is so deep-rooted and entrenched, that we need to dive deeply into the description of reality, inculcate it in our daily lives and bring in onto an emotional level.

Object of negation:

In order to gain a correct understanding of reality we need to follow a number of contemplative steps. The first step is to identify the *object of negation*. The ignorance that misperceives reality on the deepest level is a *superimposing* wrong consciousness because it superimposes a characteristic onto things that they do not possess. Therefore, we need to begin our investigation of reality with negating that characteristic; we need to first negate the way in which phenomena do *not* exist instead of positing the way in which phenomena *do* exist. However, before we can start to negate this characteristic we must identify it, i.e. we must identify the *object of negation*.

According to the highest Buddhist philosophical tenet, the Madhyamika Prasangika, the following synonyms are cited as the object of negation:

- being truly established (Tib.: *bden par grub pa*)
- existing truly (Tib.: *bden par yod pa*)

- existing inherently/intrinsically (Tib.: *rang bzhin gyis grub pa*)
- existing ultimately (Tib.: *don dam par grub pa*)
- existing as [its own] suchness (Tib.: *de kho na nyid du grub pa*)
- existing as [its own] reality (Tib.: *yang dag par grub pa*)
- existing by way of its own character/nature (Tib.: *rang gi mtshan nyid kyis grub pa*)
- existing substantially (Tib.: *rdzas yod*)
- being able to constitute itself (Tib.: *tshugs thub tu grub pa*)
- existing from the side of the object [rather than being imputed by the subject, the mind] (Tib.: *rang ngos nas grub pa*)
- existing objectively (Tib.: *yul gyi steng nas grub pa*)
- existing through its own power (Tib.: *rang dbang du grub pa*)
- existing by way of its own entity (Tib.: *rang gi ngo bo nyid kyis grub pa*)
- existing in addition to/on top of the object of designation (Tib.: *btags yul gyi steng nas grub pa*)
- existing in addition to/ on top of the basis of imputation (Tib.: *gdags gzhi'i steng nas grub pa*)
- existing from the side of the basis of imputation (Tib.: *gdags gzhi'i ngos nas grub pa*)
- existing in the manner of covering the basis of designation (Tib.: *gdags zhi'i go sa gnon pa'i tshul du yod pa*)

In other words, our ignorance over-concretizes the status of phenomena; it perceives each and every phenomenon as having a substantial, independent, and self-instituting essence that exists in its own right, and is findable under analysis. Ignorance perceives the "I", the body, tables, cars, flowers, etc. as existing above and beyond their parts, as having their own ontological status, existing objectively out there, independent of consciousness, and waiting to be revealed. This mode of existence we either actively *apprehend* phenomena to have or it *appears* to us whenever we take a phenomenon to mind. Taking the example of a car, either we actively apprehend the car to exist inherently, objectively, etc. or whenever we take the car to mind it appears to us to exist this way.

Having identified the object of negation we now need to investigate whether the object of negation actually exists, whether such substantial, inherent and objective existence holds up to analysis. We need to analyze whether there is, for instance, an intrinsically and truly existent car, a kind of "car-ness" that can be found among the parts, the shape, and color of the car. If it really exists we should be able to find it.

It is important to understand that here we do not analyze *whether* the car exists but *how* it exists. However, since we are unable to differentiate between the car that *exists* and between the inherently existent car that does *not* exist, it may seem to us that we are actually analyzing the existence of the car itself.

The Buddhist scriptures describe numerous types of reasoning that logically refute the object of negation. If, for instance, the car existed objectively and was able to constitute itself we would be able to see the car without having to depend on seeing something that is not the car. However, in actuality whenever we say we see the car we always see something that is not the car but only a part of it. The car consists of a collection of different parts assembled in a particular way. But we are not able to see the entirety of those different parts because when we see the front we do not see the back, and when we see the outside we do not see the inside. Therefore, since the front, the back, the inside, and the outside of the car are not the car we only ever see something that is not the car. The same applies to other phenomena such as the "I", the body, trees, forests, and so forth.

Furthermore, if an intrinsically existent car existed it would have to be either one/identical with its parts or different/separate from its parts; there is no third possibility.

If the car was one/identical with its parts it would have to be utterly and in all ways one with its tires, doors, roof, etc. Since those parts are plural the car would have to be plural or since the car is singular the parts of the car would have to be singular. Also, it would not make sense to talk of the 'tire of the car' since that implies an "owner" of the tire that is different from the tire itself. If the car was one with *all* of its parts it would further not make sense to say that the car is broken when only the engine is broken because for the car to be broken all of its parts would have to be broken.

If the intrinsically existent car was different/separate from its parts it would have to be completely separate from its tires, doors, roof, etc. In that case, the car would have to be findable after removing its parts.

This type of analysis is called "ultimate analysis" for it searches for the car's inherent, substantial, and objective existence but instead finds the car's deepest level of existence, the car's ultimate truth which is the car's *lack* of inherent, substantial, and objective existence. Therefore, the car itself is a conventional truth whereas the car's *lack* of inherent, substantial, and objective existence is an ultimate truth.

Having thus negated the way the car does *not exist* we need to posit the way the car *does exist*, for even though the car does not exist by way of its own character and from its own side, it nevertheless exists. The way the car exists is explained in the context of explaining dependent arising.

Dependent arising

Sanskrit: *pratitya samutpada*

Tibetan: *rten 'brel / rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba* (pronounced: *den drel / den ching drel war jung wa*)

English: dependent arising / dependent origination / that which arises as [a phenomenon] that is connected and dependent [on other phenomena]

The concept of dependent arising addresses the way in which phenomena exist. The Tibetan word for dependent arising, *rten 'brel*, is the abbreviated form of *rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba*. Since it is not easy to literally translate this term, a translation of each word may help to get a better sense of its meaning:

rten - depend/rely

cing - and

'brel ba - connect/relate/pertain to

'byung ba - arise/come forth/occur/originate

Therefore, *rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba* can be translated as 'that which arises as [a phenomenon] that is connected and dependent [on other phenomena]'. The more common translation is 'dependent arising' or 'dependent origination'. Thus, phenomena exist because they are *dependent arising*, i.e. they are phenomena that are connected to and dependent on a myriad of different other phenomena. Taking the example of the car, there are numerous different phenomena that the car is connected to and dependent on, that are responsible for the existence of the car. Those phenomena can be classified into three categories:

1. causes and conditions
2. parts
3. imputation by name and thought

Therefore, there are three levels of dependent arising:

- 1) dependence on causes and conditions
- 2) dependence on parts
- 3) dependence on imputation by name and thought

It is extremely important to reflect on the three levels of dependent arising, for it prevents us from falling into the extreme of nihilism. When we subject phenomena to ultimate analysis there is the danger that we cultivate the wrong idea that phenomena do not actually exist. Thus, contemplating dependent arising helps us to overcome such wrong view and facilitates our realization of how phenomena really exist.

Furthermore, the understanding of dependent arising also promotes the understanding of emptiness while the understanding of emptiness in turn promotes the understanding of dependent arising. In fact, the realization of the subtlest level of dependent arising must be preceded by the realization of emptiness.

1) Dependence on causes and conditions

This is the coarsest of the three levels of dependent arising because it is easier to understand than the second and third level. It only applies to impermanent phenomena, for permanent phenomena are not produced in dependence on causes

and conditions. The car, for instance, exists because it is a dependently arisen phenomenon that was produced by numerous causes and conditions.

As mentioned above, the understanding of this level of dependence also promotes the understanding of emptiness. Thus, if we reflect on this type of dependence we come to see that due to the car's dependence on causes and conditions, the car cannot exist from its own side because if something existed that way it would exist through its own power and therefore be *independent* of other phenomena.

If the contemplation of the dependence on causes and conditions is taken to a subtler level of ultimate analysis, we also come to see that, despite our sense that there is a truly existent moment of the initial production of the car, it is impossible to find that moment; it is not possible to determine the very moment when the cause of the car ceases and the car comes into existence. The reason for this is that there is no smallest moment in time so that no matter how brief a moment is, it can be further divided into even smaller moments. However, if the car existed substantially, objectively, and by way of its own character – the way it appears to us to exist– there would have to be a smallest moment in time, for we would be able to pinpoint the exact first moment of the car.

2) Dependence on parts

This level of dependence is subtler than the previous level. It refers to the fact that all phenomena, whether impermanent or permanent, are dependent on their parts. Taking the example of the car, the car has spatial parts such as its doors, the roof, and the tires, and it has temporal parts, such as yesterdays' car, today's car and tomorrow's car. Since it is composed of and dependent on those parts, the car exists.

Furthermore, reflecting on this level of dependent arising also facilitates the comprehension of emptiness, for despite the car existing in dependence on its parts, if we subject the car to ultimate analysis, by searching for some inherent car, a kind of essence or "car-ness" among its parts, we will not be able to find it. In fact, since there is no partless particle or a smallest moment in time, we can mentally take apart the car *endlessly* without ever finding a car. Hence, even though we have a sense that there is a car that truly exists in space and time, when we take apart the spatial parts of the car we are unable to find a car that truly occupies space and when we take apart the temporal parts of the car we are unable to find a car that truly occupies time. Regarding the latter, since there is no smallest moment in time we are unable to pinpoint an ultimately existent present moment of the car, for every present moment can again be divided into a former, middling and later moment. Therefore, it is also not possible to posit an ultimately existent past and future car, for the past and future depend on the present.

3) Dependence on imputation

Dependence on imputation by name and thought is the deepest level of dependent arising. It is on this level that dependent arising and the ultimate truth really connect. As explained above, the ultimate truth presents the way in which a phenomenon does *not exist* whereas dependent arising takes the same phenomenon from a positive perspective, presenting the way in which it *does exist*.

Dependence on imputation by name and thought refers to the fact that phenomena are imputed, designated, or labeled by a conceptual consciousness (thought) and a term (name) to designate it by. The car, for example, is a car in dependence on a conceptual consciousness imputing 'car' on the basis of a roof, windshield, tires, steering wheel, etc. that are arranged in a specific way and perform a specific function. The car exists because a conceptual consciousness labeled it a car, and if it was not labeled a car it would not be one.

Another example is a 100 Shekel bill. Due to a specific quality of paper, engraving, and coloring, the national mint labeled '100 Shekel' on a piece of paper, thereby giving it a specific value. The 100 Shekel bill does not exist from its own side but exists in dependence on such imputation by name and thought. The same applies to countries, cities, forests, and all other phenomena. They exist because they are apprehended by conceptual consciousness and given a label.

However, even though imputation is necessary for a phenomenon to exist, it is not a sufficient condition for existence. Imputation by consciousness must occur in relation to an appropriate *basis of imputation*. Therefore, there is a difference between imputing snake on a coiled, speckled rope and imputing snake on the aggregates of an actual snake. In the first case, the coiled, speckled rope is not the basis of imputation of the snake, for it does not perform the function of a snake, whereas in the second case the snake aggregates perform the function of a snake and therefore are a suitable basis of imputation. Hence even though whatever exists is merely imputed, whatever is merely imputed does not necessarily exist, since the snake imputed on the coiled, speckled rope does not exist.

However, both, the snake imputed on the rope and the snake imputed on the snake aggregates, are similar in that they cannot be found as existing independently of imputation and present within the rope or the aggregates. This is why past masters have given the example of imputing a snake on a coiled, speckled rope in order to illustrate the third level of dependent arising.

Therefore, phenomena are explained to exist conventionally, relatively and mutually dependently. For instance 'I' and 'other', 'here' and 'there', 'long' and 'short', 'hot' and 'cold', 'whole' and 'parts', and so forth are merely imputed in dependence on a variety of different phenomena. 'I' or 'here' are imputed on the basis of their parts, in dependence on 'others' or 'there', and in dependence on the point of view of the person using the term. Similarly, 'long' is imputed in relation to 'short', 'hot' is imputed in relation to 'cold', and so forth.

This relationship of mutual dependence also exists for a 'cause' and its 'result' because 'cause' is labeled on a phenomenon in dependence on its result, and 'result' is imputed on a phenomenon in dependence on its cause. More specifically, in the case of phenomena that have a cause-effect relationship, such as firewood and a wood fire, the wood fire depends on its cause the firewood because (1) from a material point of view the wood fire must be preceded and produced by the firewood and because (2) from the point of view of imputation the wood fire is labeled "wood fire" in reliance on the firewood. At the same time the firewood also depends on the wood fire, for without the wood fire it would not be called "firewood".

In short, phenomena exist because they are *merely* imputed. Here the word "merely" implies that phenomena are imputed without existing inherently and thus without existing in addition to, from the side of, or in the manner of covering their basis of imputation. They exist conventionally because they are labeled in dependence on common conventions.

The moment we start to search for, for instance, a car that can be pinpointed exactly in space and time or that exists separately from its parts and imputation, we engage in ultimate analysis and thereby in the search for an ultimately, intrinsically existent car. Since such a car cannot exist, it cannot be found by ultimate analysis. Even the *existent* car cannot be found by ultimate analysis, for if it was found by that type of analysis it would have to exist ultimately. However, even though the car does not exist ultimately for it cannot bear ultimate analysis, it exists conventionally which is sufficient for it to exist. In fact, it cannot exist any other way.

Having subjected the car to this kind of ultimate analysis, we also need to subject other phenomena to the same kind of scrutiny, phenomena such as the "I", mind, external objects such as shapes, colors, sounds, smells, tastes, and tangible object, activities such as walking, talking, writing, and thinking, continuities in time such as weeks, months, and years, and so forth.

This concludes a brief presentation of phenomena's emptiness and dependent arising. It follows a detailed explanation of the two truths.

The Etymology of the two truths

1. The etymology of the conventional truth

Sanskrit: *saṃvṛti satya*

Tibetan: *kun dzob bden pa* (pronounced: *kuen dzob den pa*)

kuen dzob = concealer/obstructor, *den pa* = truth/reality

There are numerous different English translations of *saṃvṛti satya* or *kuen dzob den pa*:

- conventional truth
- relative truth

- truth-for-a-concealer
- concealer truth
- superficial truth

The etymology of **samvṛti satya** or **kuen dzob den pa** is "truth for a concealer". In general, the Sanskrit term **samvṛti** and the Tibetan term **kuen-dzob** have several meanings. However, in the context of the phrase **samvṛti satya** or **kuen dzob den pa**, the word **samvṛti** or **kuen-dzob** means "concealer". Here concealer refers to the ignorance that conceals the actual nature of phenomena.

That type of ignorance is a delusion that acts to hinder or obstruct sentient beings from viewing the ultimate nature of phenomena. Even though phenomena do not exist inherently, this ignorance superimposes the characteristic of inherent existence onto those phenomena – a characteristic phenomena do not possess. Therefore, since it conceals the real nature of phenomena, it is a "concealer". E.g. the ignorance that apprehends the car to exist inherently is a *concealer* because it conceals the real nature of the car -- the car's emptiness of inherent existence. Moreover, even though the car is not a *truth* it is a *truth* for the perspective of that *concealer*, i.e. for the perspective of the ignorance apprehending the car to exist inherently. Therefore, the car is a conventional truth because it is a *truth for a concealer*.

The Sanskrit terms **samvṛti** and the Tibetan term **kuen-dzob** also connote "obstructor", for that ignorance obstructs the truth.

However, the car is not a *truth* because it does not exist the way it appears to sentient beings' direct perceptions. This means that there is a disparity between the way the car *appears* to those direct perceptions and the way it *actually exists*. When the car appears to sentient beings' direct perception it appears to exist inherently. Nonetheless, this appearance does not accord with the actual mode of existence of the car since the car lacks such inherent existence. Therefore, conventional truths are explained to be falsities (Sanskrit: *mṛsa*, Tibetan: *rdzun pa*) because they falsely or deceptively appear to exist inherently. Furthermore, the car is not a truth but a falsity since the *only* awareness, from whose perspective it is a truth, is ignorance, i.e. a wrong consciousness.

As mentioned above, even though in the context of the phrase **samvṛti satya** or **kuen dzob den pa**, the word **samvṛti** or **kuen dzob** means to conceal, Chandrakirti says in his text **Clear Words** that the term in general has three meanings:

- (I) concealer/obstructor
- (II) relative or interdependent
- (III) worldly conventions

Examples of conventional truths

All impermanent phenomena such as consciousnesses, actions, colors, shapes, sounds, smells, and so forth as well as permanent phenomena other than emptinesses are conventional truths.

2. The etymology of the ultimate truth

Sanskrit: *paramartha satya*

Tibetan: *don dam bden pa* (pronounced: *doen dam den pa*)

doen = meaning/ object/function/fact, *dam (pa)*= supreme/highest/excellent, *den pa* = truth/reality

The different English translations of *paramartha satya* or *doen dam den pa* are:

- ultimate truth
- absolute truth
- actual truth
- final truth
- deepest truth

There are two etymologies of *paramartha satya* or *doen dam den pa*:

- a) One etymology is "*truth for the supreme meaning*". Here *supreme meaning* refers to the meditative equipoise directly realizing emptiness. E.g. the car's emptiness of true existence is a *truth* for the meditative equipoise directly realizing the car's emptiness because the car's emptiness of true existence is directly realized by that meditative equipoise. Further, the meditative equipoise directly realizing the car's emptiness of true existence is a *supreme meaning* because it directly realizes the ultimate mode of existence of car and thus serves as the antidote to ignorance, anger, attachment etc.
- b) Another etymology of *paramartha satya* or *doen dam den pa* is "*supreme object truth*". The car's lack of true existence is a *supreme object truth* because it is both, a *supreme object* and a *truth*. The car's lack of true existence is a *supreme object* because it is the principal object of the meditative equipoise directly realizing the car's emptiness, and its realization serves as the antidote to ignorance, anger, attachment and so forth. Further, the car's lack of true existence is a *truth* and not a falsity because it exists the way it appears to sentient beings' direct perception. The direct perceiver (in sentient beings' continua) that directly realizes the car's emptiness of true existence is a meditative equipoise that directly realizes the emptiness of all phenomena. Therefore, this meditative equipoise directly realizes the car's lack of true existence, self's lack of true existence, consciousness' lack of true existence, the car's *emptiness*' lack of true existence and so forth. When it directly realizes e.g. the car's lack of true existence the car's lack of true existence appears to it. However, the car's lack of true existence does not appear as truly existent but as lacking true existence. Thus, there is no disparity between the way the car's lack of true existence exists and the way it appears to sentient beings' direct perception.

Examples of ultimate truths

The emptinesses, i.e. the lack of true existence, of each and every phenomenon (including emptiness itself) are ultimate truths. Therefore, car's emptiness of true existence, consciousness' emptiness of true existence, action's emptiness of true existence, color's emptiness of true existence, emptiness' emptiness of true existence, etc. are all examples of ultimate truths.

The Definitions of the Two Truths

The definitions of the two truths present the two truths as objects of two different types of valid cognizers. Valid cognizers are consciousnesses that find or realize (i.e. incontrovertibly understand) their objects. Conventional truths are found or realized by conventional valid cognizers whereas ultimate truths are found or realized by ultimate valid cognizers. Conventional and ultimate valid cognizers each operate within their own sphere of objects, certifying the existence of their objects without damaging the existence of objects in the other sphere.

Conventional valid cognizers in the continua of sentient beings realize conventional truths without being able to get at ultimate truths (the *lack* of inherent existence). They are mistaken consciousnesses because their objects deceptively appear to exist intrinsically and by way of their own power (which is why conventional truths are explained to be false). Nevertheless, they are incontrovertible valid cognizers, for, despite their objects appearing to exist inherently, they realize those objects. For instance, even though an eye consciousnesses apprehending the car is mistaken with respect to the car appearing to it to exist inherently, it incontrovertibly understands the car, it realizes its color and shape.

Ultimate valid cognizers in the continua of sentient beings, on the other hand, realize *how* phenomena exist on their deepest level; they realize their ultimate truth, their lack of inherent existence. However, they cannot apprehend phenomena other than ultimate truths, that is, they cannot apprehend conventional truths.

For instance, an ultimate meditative equipoise that directly realizes the ultimate truth of the car does not realize the car; the car does not even appear to it. The only phenomenon that appears to that awareness is the car's ultimate truth. However, even though the car neither appears nor is found by that ultimate valid cognizer, it does not mean that the car does not exist. It is important to understand that there is a difference between not being *found* and being *refuted* by an ultimate valid cognizer. The car is not found by ultimate analysis because it is not being searched for. Ultimate analysis searches for the car's true and inherent existence. The car's true and inherent existence is not only not found by such awareness, but also refuted by it, because that is what it is searching for.

Please note that a direct realization of emptiness is radically different from any realization we are acquainted with. There is a powerful experience of an utter indifferenciability of the subject (the meditative equipoise that directly realizes emptiness) and the object (emptiness) in such a direct cognition of emptiness; there is the sense that the subject and object have merged, like water being poured

into water, which is one of the reasons for the ultimate meditative equipoise being a non-dualistic perceiver. Another reason for it being a non-dualistic perceiver is that only ultimate truths and not conventional truths appear to it.

The definition of the conventional truth:

The definition of the conventional truth is: (1) **it** is the object found by a conventional valid cognizer and (2) in dependence on **it**, [such a valid cognizer] becomes a *conventional* valid cognizer

The different aspects of the definition:

1. **It** is the object found by a conventional valid cognizer: a conventional valid cognizer is an awareness whose main object is a conventional truth. For instance, an inferential cognizer realizing the car is a conventional valid cognizer. Its main object is the car which is a conventional truth. Since the car is realized by the valid cognizer, the car is *found* by that valid cognizer.
2. In dependence on **it**, [such a valid cognizer] becomes a *conventional* valid cognizer: since a conventional truth, the car, is the main object and is found by the conventional valid cognizer, that conventional valid cognizer (which apprehends the car) becomes a *conventional* valid cognizer in dependence on that conventional truth, the car.

It is important to understand that even though conventional valid cognizers find conventional truths, for they realize cars, colors, consciousness, actions etc., they do not necessarily realize an object *to be* a conventional truth. In order to realize an object to be a conventional truth, one must have realized that object to be false or deceptive, the realization of which must be preceded by the realization of that object's emptiness or ultimate truth.

The definition of the ultimate truth:

The definition of the ultimate truth is: (1) **it** is the object found by an ultimate valid cognizer and (2) in dependence on **it**, [such a valid cognizer] becomes an *ultimate* valid cognizer

The different aspects of the definition:

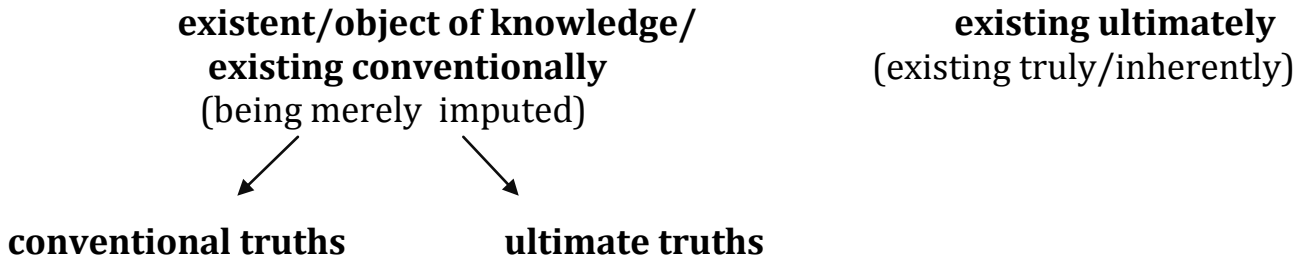
1. **It** is the object found by an ultimate valid cognizer: an ultimate valid cognizer is an awareness whose main object is an ultimate truth. When an ultimate valid cognizer searches, for instance, for an inherently existent car among the basis of imputation of the car, the cognizer does not find the inherently existent car or the car itself but it finds the ultimate truth, i.e. the *emptiness* of inherent existence, of the car. Thus, the ultimate truth (the car's emptiness of inherent existence) is the object that is found and realized by that ultimate valid cognizer.
2. In dependence on **it**, [such a valid cognizer] becomes an *ultimate* valid cognizer: in dependence on the ultimate truth of the car, the valid cognizer (that apprehends the ultimate truth of the car) becomes an ultimate awareness.

Hence an ultimate valid cognizer is an *ultimate* valid cognizer in dependence on its main object, an ultimate truth.

Conventional Truth vs. Conventionally Existent and Ultimate Truth vs. Ultimately Existent

It is important to understand that there is a difference between a **conventional truth** and **existing conventionally**. For instance, the ultimate truth of the car is not a conventional truth but exists conventionally. It exists conventionally because it is a phenomenon that is merely imputed. Therefore, everything that exists – conventional and ultimate truths – exists conventionally. The opposite of existing conventionally is to **exist ultimately**. To exist ultimately means to exist truly/inherently. Since whatever exists is *empty* of existing truly/inherently there is nothing that exists ultimately.

Therefore, object of knowledge, existent, phenomenon, and existing conventionally are equivalent.



As explained earlier, the word "conventional" (*saṃvṛti* or *kuen dzob*) of the term "conventional truth" refers to a concealer ignorance that apprehends inherent existence. However "conventional" (*saṃvṛti* or *kuen dzob*) of the term "existing conventionally" refers to a conceptual consciousness which imputes conventions.

Thus, even though the car, for instance, is a conventional truth, its inherent existence does not exist conventionally. In fact, the car's inherent existence neither exists ultimately nor conventionally, for it is non-existent.

The Basis of the Category of the Two Truths

Object of knowledge (which is equivalent to 'existent', 'phenomenon', 'object of comprehension', etc.) can be categorized into the two truths, conventional and ultimate truth. Therefore, *object of knowledge* is the basis of the category of the two truths.

Sanskrit: *Jneya*

Tibetan: *shes bya* (pronounced: *she ja*)

she = know, *ja* = object

English: Object of knowledge

From the *Sutra of Father and Son's Meeting*:

Thus the Tātāgatha comprehends the conventional and the ultimate truths. What is to be known too is confined to this conventional and the ultimate truth alone. These, in turn, the Blessed One clearly perceived, clearly knew, and excellently actualized to be emptiness. Therefore, he is referred to as omniscient.

The meaning of the sutra is that the Tātāgatha is omniscient because he simultaneously comprehends the two truths. Furthermore, the category of the two truths is definite in number because an 'object of knowledge' is exhausted within this twofold category. This means that there are not more than two truths and that the two truths cannot be condensed into less than two truths. Therefore, whatever is an object of knowledge must be one of the two truths and whatever is one of the two truths must be an object of knowledge.

The ***Sutra of Father and Son's Meeting*** says:

What is to be known too is confined to this conventional and the ultimate truth alone.

The ***Sutra definitely Presenting Suchness*** says:

*There is the conventional and likewise the ultimate truth;
There is never at any time a third truth.*

Chandrakīrti says in his ***Auto-Commentary [on the Supplement to the Middle Way]***:

Likewise, whatever other minor truths there are these too one should ascertain only as belonging to either of the two truths.

Even though 'object of knowledge' and 'existent' are equivalent, 'object of knowledge' is explained here to be the *basis* of the category of the two truths (that is, object of knowledge is that which is categorized or divided into the two truths). It is explained to be the basis of the category of the two truths in order to avoid the wrong view that the ultimate truth is not an object of knowledge, i.e. that the ultimate truth cannot be known.

This wrong view arises from misunderstanding the meaning of the following quotes:

From the ***Sutra of Father and Son's Meeting***:

The conventional is seen by the Tātāgatha as that which the world is involved with. That which is the ultimate is inexpressible, it is not an object of knowledge, it is not an object of detailed knowledge, it is not an object of thorough knowledge, it is not shown.

Shantideva comments on the above sutra quote in his ***Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life***:

*The ultimate is not an object of perception of awareness
Awareness is declared to be conventional*

The actual meaning of those passages is that the ultimate truth is not apprehended by a *dualistic* direct perceiver and is therefore not the object of knowledge or the object of perception of such a perceiver. If the ultimate truth was not an object of knowledge, i.e. it could not be known, it would contradict the earlier quote from the ***Sutra of Father and Son's Meeting*** which states that the Tathagatha is omniscient because he simultaneously comprehends the two truths. Furthermore, the line “*Awareness is declared to be conventional*” is not saying that only awarenesses are conventional truths but that also the *objects* of conventional awarenesses are conventional truths.

However, some scholars take those two passages literally and assert that the ultimate truth *cannot* be known. One type of reasoning behind their assertion is that since the ultimate truth is not a conventional truth it cannot be known by a conventional valid cognizer; it can only be known by an ultimate valid cognizer. However, if it was known by an ultimate cognizer it would be found by such a cognizer and therefore exist ultimately and inherently. Since all phenomena, including the ultimate truth, lack ultimate and inherent existence, ultimate valid cognizers cannot know the ultimate truth.

Our own system counters this by arguing that the ultimate truth is found by an ultimate valid cognizer – an ultimate analysis – but does not exist ultimately because it is not found by the ultimate valid cognizer that analyses *its* inherent existence. For instance, the ultimate valid cognizer that searches for the car's inherent existence finds the car's *lack* of inherent existence, that is, the car's ultimate truth. The ultimate valid cognizer that searches for the inherent existence of the car's ultimate truth, on the other hand, does not find the car's ultimate truth but finds the *ultimate truth* of the car's ultimate truth.

The Relationship between the Two Truths

The Buddha taught that all phenomena have two natures or entities – conventional truth and ultimate truth. While phenomena do not have *inherently existent* natures, all phenomena must have natures in order to exist. Therefore, a single phenomenon such as the car has a conventional and an ultimate nature.

However, this does not mean that the car *is* the two truths, i.e. that the car is a conventional truth from the perspective of an ordinary person and an ultimate truth from the perspective of an Arya being (i.e. a person who has directly realized emptiness).

The car has the nature of a conventional truth because it is a conventional truth and it has the nature of an ultimate truth because it possesses the characteristic or the attribute of being empty of inherent existence, which is an ultimate truth.

The two truths are of one nature. However, they are not one, for they are not identical but different, distinct phenomena. The fact that the two truths are different phenomena but of one nature refers to the two truths *in relation to* a particular phenomenon. It does not mean that every conventional truth is of one

nature with every ultimate truth. For instance, the car is a conventional truth and the car's emptiness of existing ultimately or truly is the car's ultimate truth. Therefore, the ultimate truth of the car is a characteristic or an attribute of the conventional truth, the car. In this way the conventional truth, the car, and the car's ultimate truth are different phenomena but are of one nature. For instance, the impermanence, the shape and the color of the car are all characteristics or attributes of the car. Therefore, the car is of one nature with its impermanence, its shape and its color. In the same way for any other phenomenon, there must be the two truths existing together at the same time, inseparably bound, but distinct.

Nagarjuna says in his ***Commentary on the Mind of Enlightenment***:

*Suchness is not observed to be a
Different [nature] from the conventional.
The conventional is taught to be emptiness;
Emptiness itself is the conventional;
One does not occur without the other,
Just as product and impermanent [are one nature and one does not occur
without the other].*

The first two lines explain that the conventional truth and the ultimate truth are of one nature. The next two lines give two reasons for why the two truths are of one nature:

- 1) all conventional truths are empty of being truly existent and
- 2) the emptiness of being truly existent is posited *on the basis of* conventional truths.

The last two lines explain that the two truths are further related in a way in which one does not exist without the other; i.e. the ultimate truth of the car does not exist if the conventional truth, the car, does not exist and the conventional truth, the car, does not exist if the ultimate truth of the car does not exist. The example that helps to illustrate this is 'product and impermanent' (which are also one nature and related in a way in which one does not exist without the other).

But even though the two truths are of one nature, they are contradictory because there is nothing that is both a conventional and an ultimate truth. There is nothing that is both a conventional and an ultimate truth because there is nothing that is both deceptive (a falsity) and non-deceptive (a truth).

The relationship between the two truths is also expressed in the following passage from the ***Heart Sutra***:

*Form is emptiness
Emptiness is form,
Emptiness is not other than form,
Form too is not other than emptiness.*

These four lines teach the four profundities:

- 1) The profundity of the ultimate
- 2) The profundity of the conventional
- 3) The profundity of the two truths being the same nature
- 4) The profundity of the two truths being nominally distinct.

Form here refers to the physical form aggregate. The form aggregate is a conventional truth whereas the form aggregate's emptiness, i.e. the form aggregate's lack of inherent existence is an ultimate truth. "*Form is emptiness*" teaches the first profundity of the ultimate because it indicates the form aggregate's emptiness of inherent existence which is the form aggregate's ultimate truth.

"*Emptiness is form*" teaches the second profundity of the conventional, for it teaches the fact that the form aggregate exists *because* it lacks inherent and objective existence. Therefore, the form aggregate is a kind of manifestation of emptiness because it depends for its existence on the form aggregate's emptiness of true and intrinsic existence.

Furthermore, the form aggregate and its ultimate truth are one nature because the form aggregate's ultimate truth is a characteristic of the form aggregate. This is expressed in the line "*emptiness is not other than form*" which teaches the profundity of the two truths being the same nature because the conventional truth, the form aggregate, is one nature with its ultimate truth, the form aggregate's lack of inherent existence.

However, even though the form aggregate and its ultimate truth are one nature, they are not identical but two nominally distinct phenomena. This is expressed in the line "*Form too is not other than emptiness*" which teaches the profundity of the two truths being nominally distinct.

Thus, the two truths are different phenomena but not of a different nature, i.e. they are not one phenomenon but of one nature.

The ***Sutra Unraveling the Thought*** cites four faults that occur if the two truths were not of one nature:

1. The pot's emptiness of being truly existent would not be the mode of abidance (the essential nature) of the pot.
2. The mind that realizes the pot's emptiness of being truly existent would not overcome the mind that apprehends the pot being truly existent.
3. The pot would not be the basis upon which the pot being truly existent is negated
4. The mind that realizes the pot's emptiness of being truly existent and the mind that apprehends the pot existing truly would coexist in a Buddha's continuum (since a Buddha would perceive the pot being truly existent and pot's emptiness of being truly existent as unrelated)

Lama Tsongkhapa says in his *Illumination of the Thought* that if phenomena and their emptiness of being truly existent were not of one nature, phenomena would have to truly exist.

Furthermore, the *Sutra Unraveling the Thought* also cites four faults that occur if the two truths were one.

If the two truths were one:

1. Direct perceivers in the continua of ordinary beings would be able to realize pot's emptiness of being truly existent.
2. Afflictions would arise in dependence on perceiving the pot's emptiness of being truly existent.
3. The pot's emptiness of being truly existent would have color and shape.
4. There would be no need for Yogis to make an effort in realizing pot's emptiness of being truly existent.

Further faults that are described in other texts are: (1) just as there is no diversity among ultimate truths, there would be no diversity among conventional truths, (2) just as there are many conventional truths that are afflictive, there would have to be many ultimate truths that are afflictive, (3) if one did not have to strive to search for the ultimate truth, the path to liberation would be beginningless.

The Conventional Truth - Real and Unreal *Relative to the Perspective of the World*

Tibetan: *'jig rten gyi shes ngo la ltos pa* (pronounced: *jig ten gyi she ngo la doe pa*)
jig ten = world/transient world/ mundane/transmigratory existence, *jig* = disintegrate/perish/destroy, *ten* = basis/support/base, *she (pa)* = consciousness/knower, *ngo* = perspective/face, *la* = grammatical particle, *doe pa* = relative to, dependent on

English: relative to the perspective of the world /or: relative to the perspective of the consciousness of the world

The proponents of the Madhyamika Svatantrika, the second highest Buddhist philosophical tenet system, assert that conventional truths can be divided into real and unreal conventional truths. However, according to the Madhyamika Prasangika tenet, such a division is not correct because all conventional truths are deceptive or false and therefore not real. In order to be real, a phenomenon must exist as it appears. Conventional truths are deceptive because to sentient beings' direct perceivers they always appear to exist inherently, as if findable among their bases of imputation.

Hence, conventional truths are unreal whereas ultimate truths are real. Ultimate truths are real or non-deceptive because to sentient beings' direct perceivers they never appear to exist inherently but appear the way they exist, that is, they appear to be *empty* of existing inherently.

However, the proponents of the Prasangika tenet assert that *relative to the perspective of the world* objects which are not ultimate truths can be categorized into those that are *real* and those that are *unreal*.

Chandrakirti says in his ***Supplement to the Middle Way***:

*Those that are apprehended by six unimpaired senses
Which are realized by the worldly [perspectives],
These are true for the world; as for the rest,
Even for the world they are posited as unreal.*

Objects that are real *relative to the perspective of the world*

Objects that are real *relative to the perspective of the world* are objects of any of the six consciousnesses (the five sense consciousnesses or the mental consciousness) that are considered to be unimpaired and unmistaken awarenesses by those who have never taken emptiness to mind. A car, for instance, is real *relative to the perspective of the world*, because the conventional valid cognizer that apprehends the car is considered unmistaken by those who have never heard or thought about emptiness. Thus, from the perspective of the world the car exists the way it appears to that conventional valid cognizer. Of course, the conventional valid cognizer that apprehends the car is actually mistaken with regard to the appearance of the car's inherent existence, but that does not prevent it from realizing the car. Therefore, even though conventional awarenesses are mistaken with regard to the appearance of inherent existence, they are nevertheless able to incontrovertibly differentiate between a face and a reflection of a face in a mirror. Hence, examples for objects that are real *relative to the perspective of the world* are cars, faces, pots, pillars, and so forth. Other examples are inherently existent person, inherently existent car, etc. Even though these latter objects do not exist, they are real *relative to the perspective of the world* because the awarenesses that apprehend them are considered to be unimpaired and unmistaken awarenesses by those who are "not directed towards emptiness" (i.e. those that are not informed by, or acting in reliance upon, or influenced by the comprehension of emptiness).

Objects that are unreal *relative to the perspective of the world*

Objects that are unreal *relative to the perspective of the world* are objects of any of the six consciousnesses that are considered to be impaired or mistaken awarenesses even by those who have never taken emptiness to mind. A reflection of a face in a mirror, for instance, is unreal *relative to the perspective of the world* because it does not exist as a face the way it appears to be a face. Therefore, the conventional awareness that apprehends the reflection of a face in a mirror is a mistaken awareness even from the perspective of those who are "not directed towards emptiness".

Other examples for objects that are unreal *relative to the perspective of the world* are a person's echo, a mirage of water, a dream-elephant, a rainbow, and so forth. These are all objects that even though they do not exist the way they appear, are existent and functioning phenomena.

Examples for non-existent objects that are unreal *relative to the perspective of the world* are the horns of a rabbit, the reflection of a face in a mirror being a real face, a person's echo being a person's voice, an elephant in a dream, a permanent, partless, independent self, and so forth.

As explained above this distinction of real and unreal objects is only *relative to the perspective of the world*; it is not from the point of view of the Madhyamika Prasangika system and therefore not *relative to the perspective of Arya beings*. Furthermore, the distinction between an object being real or unreal is made in dependence on the awareness apprehending the object and since all conventional awarenesses are mistaken all conventional truths must be unreal.

An analogy for objects that are real and unreal *relative to the perspective of the world* is a story that Buddhapalita tells in his ***Buddhapalita's Commentary***: Two villagers are inspecting a painting on a wall and begin to argue. One villager identifies the image of a god holding a wheel as Ishvara and that of a god holding a trident as Krishna. The other villager ("correctly") asserts the opposite. In order to dissolve their dispute they ask a wandering ascetic to whom it is immediately apparent that neither painting is a god. Nonetheless, the ascetic satisfies the villagers by answering in relation to their worldly perspective, telling them who is right and who is wrong. His answer is correct relative to the villagers' perspective, even though this does not accord with his own perspective of what the nature of a god is.

Mere Conventionalities

As explained above, conventional truths are considered "truths for a concealer" on account of being misperceived by ignorance. Therefore, conventional truths are *truths* relative to the perspective of those who possess the concealer ignorance. But how are conventional truths viewed by sentient beings who have overcome such ignorance?

There are three types of sentient beings who have overcome or eliminated ignorance:

- 1) Hearer Arhats
- 2) Solitary Realizer Arhats
- 3) Bodhisattvas who have reached any of the three pure bhumis (the eighth, ninth or tenth bhumi)

For the sake of brevity those three are referred to as "the three beings".

Hearers and Solitary Realizers realize emptiness (conceptually and in dependence on a correct reason) at the latest on the 'middling' Hinayana path of accumulation. They reach the Hinayana path of preparation when they generate a mind that is a union of calm abiding and special insight taking emptiness as its object. Once they cultivate a meditative equipoise that realizes emptiness *directly* they reach the

Hinayana path of seeing. On the Hinayana path of seeing, while realizing emptiness directly, Hearers and Solitary Realizers eliminate the *intellectually acquired* ignorance and all the delusions that are induced by that ignorance. After they have eliminated the intellectually acquired ignorance etc. and when they again enter into the meditative equipoise realizing emptiness directly, Hearers and Solitary Realizers reach the Hinayana path of meditation. On the Hinayana path of meditation they gradually eliminate the *innate* ignorance and the other delusions that are induced by innate ignorance. They repeatedly enter into the meditative equipoise (realizing emptiness directly) and each meditative equipoise eliminates one of the levels of innate ignorance etc., starting with the coarsest level. When Hearers and Solitary Realizers have eliminated the *subtlest* level of innate ignorance etc. they reach the Hinayana path of no-more-learning, and become Arhats. (See CHART)

Bodhisattvas also realize emptiness (conceptually and in dependence on correct reasons) at the latest on the 'middling' Mahayana path of accumulation. They reach the Mahayana path of preparation when they generate a mind that is a union of calm abiding and special insight taking emptiness as its object. Once they cultivate a meditative equipoise that directly realizes emptiness they reach the Mahayana path of seeing. On the Mahayana path of seeing, while realizing emptiness directly, Bodhisattvas eliminate the *intellectually acquired* ignorance and all the delusions that are induced by that ignorance. After they have eliminated the intellectually acquired ignorance etc. and when they again enter into the meditative equipoise realizing emptiness directly, Bodhisattvas reach the Mahayana path of meditation. On the Mahayana path of meditation, from the first until the seventh Bodhisattva bhumi, they repeatedly enter into the meditative equipoise (realizing emptiness directly) in dependence on which they gradually eliminate the coarse and subtle levels of the *innate* ignorance and all the delusions that are induced by that ignorance. On the eighth bhumi of the Mahayana path of meditation Bodhisattvas have eliminated innate ignorance etc. and thus reach Nirvana (the cessation of ignorance and of the delusions induced by ignorance). During the last three pure bhumis and when absorbed in the meditative equipoise (directly realizing emptiness) they gradually eliminate the coarse and subtle *imprints* of the intellectually acquired and innate ignorance and the coarse and subtle *imprints* of the delusions that are induced by the two types of ignorance. Having overcome the *subtlest* imprints of the two types of ignorance and the *subtlest* imprints of the delusions that are induced by the two types of ignorance, the Bodhisattvas become fully enlightened Buddhas. (See CHART)

Even though the various awarenesses of the three beings are still affected by the appearance of the inherent existence of phenomena, none of them *apprehends* phenomena to exist inherently. None of the three beings' awarenesses *apprehends* phenomena to exist inherently anymore, because the three beings have eliminated the concealer ignorance. Therefore, fabrications or conventional truths are not truths but *mere* conventionalities *relative to the perspective* of those three beings.

Relative to the perspective of those three beings conventional truths are mere conventionalities because even though they appear to them to exist inherently they do not apprehend them to exist in this way.

For instance, the reflection of a face in a mirror is a truth or a non-deceptive phenomenon *relative to the perspective* of those who have not learned yet that the reflection of a face in a mirror is not a face. However, relative to the perspective of those who have understood that the reflection of the face is not a face, the reflection of a face is not a truth but a deceptive phenomenon. *Relative to the perspective* of those people the reflection is a deceptive phenomenon because even though it appears to them to be a face they do not apprehend it *to be* a face.

However, even though *relative to the perspective* of those three beings conventional phenomena are mere conventionalities this does not mean that *relative to the perspective* of those three beings conventional phenomena are not conventional truths or "truths for a concealer". Those who have overcome afflictive ignorance realize that conventional phenomena are truths for the ignorant consciousnesses of *other* beings. Furthermore, they may also remember how conventional phenomena previously appeared to their own ignorant awarenesses. Therefore, *relative to the perspective* of the three beings, conventional phenomena are both, conventional truths and mere conventionalities.

Relative to the perspective of the three beings conventional phenomena are both, conventional truths (truths for a concealer) and mere conventionalities because the word "mere" does not eliminate conventional truths but truths.

This is also explained in Lama Tsongkhapa's ***Ocean of Reasoning***:

Those who have abandoned the concealer that is afflictive ignorance, do not have the concealer apprehending true existence from whose perspective [phenomena] are posited as truths. This proves that compositional phenomena are not truths from their perspective; it does not prove that compositional phenomena are not conventional truths. Therefore, since for those (from whose perspective compositional phenomena are mere conventionalities) of the two – "conventional" and "truth" – truth is not possible, the word "mere"[of the term "mere conventionality] eliminates truth. How would it eliminate conventional truth?

Therefore, "childish" ordinary beings are deceived by the appearances of inherent existence, whereas from the perspective of the three beings, fabricated conventional phenomena are dependently arisen and thus mere conventionalities. From the perspective of the three beings, fabricated phenomena are mere conventionalities and not truths because the three beings have eliminated **afflictive obscurations**. **Afflictive obscurations** are the obstructions that hinder one from reaching the state of an Arhat and they refer to ignorance, the other

delusions induced by ignorance such as anger, attachment, etc., and the *seeds* of ignorance and the other delusions.

However, the three beings are still affected by **cognitive obscurations**, which are the *imprints* of the root ignorance and the *imprints* of the other afflictive emotions induced by the root ignorance. Those cognitive obstructions are the obstructions to omniscience, for they are the obstructions Bodhisattvas have to overcome in order to attain the omniscient state of a Buddha.

Therefore, mere conventionalities do not appear to the three beings while they are absorbed in the meditative equipoise realizing emptiness directly. They appear to the three beings only during the subsequent attainment when awarenesses are tainted by cognitive obscurations. The reason for mere conventionalities appearing to the three beings only while being tainted by cognitive obscurations is that conventional phenomena still appear to them as existing inherently. However, even though they appear to exist inherently during the period of subsequent attainment the three being's awarenesses know that conventional truths do not exist the way they appear, which is why from their perspective conventional truths are mere conventionalities.

The Ultimate Truth

Chandrakirti says in the ***Supplement to the Middle Way***:

*Through the force of cataract, distorted entities,
Such as falling hair and so forth, are imputed.
What is reality is seen by the one with clear eyes;
Likewise understand [this to be the case] in this context.*

Chandrakirti says in his ***Auto-commentary on the Supplement to the Middle Way***:

Those with cataract erroneously see entities such as falling hairs and so on. Even though those without cataract may point out [that there are no falling hairs, those with cataract] are incapable of cognizing reality as it is, that is, they are incapable of not seeing hairs in the same way that those [people] who are free of cataract [do not see hairs].

Chandrakirti explains with the help of an analogy how ultimate truths are perceived by those who are free from the *imprints* of the ignorance that apprehends true existence. The analogy is of two people who are looking at a vessel in front of them. One of them is suffering from an eye disease such as cataract which induces the appearance of falling hairs. This appearance causes him to repeatedly overturn the vessel in order to remove the hairs. The other person is free from that disease and thus free from such appearance. Since he is not affected by the disease he is able to see what is actually there, i.e. the *emptiness* or the *absence* of falling hairs.

Furthermore, even though the person who suffers from the eye disease may eventually be able to realize the emptiness or the absence of falling hairs (with a mental consciousness), he is not be able to experience the vessel in front of him in the way the person free from the eye disease does.

In a similar way, when sentient beings and Buddhas look at conventional truths such as the aggregates, to sentient beings' awarenesses the aggregates' inherent existence appears whereas to Buddhas' omniscient minds the aggregates' *emptiness* of inherent existence appears. The reason for this is that Buddhas are free from afflictive and cognitive obscurations and thus free from any kind of mistaken appearance.

Moreover, though sentient beings are able to *directly* realize the aggregates' emptiness of inherent existence (with their mental consciousness), they are not able to experience the aggregates in the same way Buddhas do. When Buddhas look at the aggregates they see "the aggregates' emptiness by way of not seeing the aggregates".

Chandrakirti says in his ***Auto-commentary on the Supplement to the Middle Way***:

The one without eye disease sees the suchness of the falling hairs; the other does not.

Similarly, the entities of the aggregates, elements, sense-spheres and so forth that are observed by those who, through being affected by the eye disease of ignorance, do not see suchness, are the conventional entities of those [phenomena]. Their ultimate truth is that which the Blessed Ones, who are free from the imprints of ignorance, see through seeing the [ultimate] nature of those very aggregates and so forth, in the way that one who does not have an eye disease sees falling hairs.

[Question:] Would not [an ultimate] nature with an aspect like that be quite impossible to see? [Answer:] True. However, they see by way of not seeing.

This passage means that Buddhas see the ultimate nature of the aggregates by way of not seeing conventional truths (the aggregates), i.e. they directly realize the aggregates' emptiness of inherent existence by way of a vanishing of the appearance of conventional truths. Therefore, "seeing by way of not seeing" is not a contradiction because that which is seen (the aggregates' emptiness of inherent existence: ultimate truth) and that which is not seen (the aggregates: conventional truth) are different.

However, this does not mean that the Buddhas do not realize conventional truths because Buddhas' awarenesses non-conceptually realize all ultimate truths by way of a vanishing of the appearance of conventional truths and simultaneously non-conceptually realize all conventional truths by way of the appearing of conventional truths. Therefore, Buddhas' minds realize ultimate truths by way of a vanishing of dualistic appearances, i.e. they realize ultimate truths non-

dualistically. At the same time, they realize conventional truths by way of an association with dualistic appearances.