

[The following selections are taken from the *Essence of Eloquence, a Classical Commentary on Distinguishing between the Figurative and the Literal* (Drang- ba dang nges-pa'i don rnam-par 'byed-pa'i bstan-bcos Legs-bshad snying-po), by Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419).]

[The translation is based upon an oral teaching of the text by Geshe Tupten Rinchen of Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery. Please note that Je Tsongkapa's root text is extremely difficult, and is best studied with the accompanying audio from the Asian Classics Institute's Course 15: "What the Buddha Really Meant" at <http://www.world-view.org/aci/online/course15.html>]

[The following selection are folios 1a-3b in the ACIP digital edition (catalog number S5396), and pp. 1-7 in the ACIP Indian paper edition.]

\*, , DRANG BA DANG NGES PA'I DON RNAM PAR 'BYED PA'I BSTAN BCOS  
LEGS BSHAD SNYING PO BZHUGS SO, ,

Herein contained is the *Essence of Eloquence, a Classical Commentary upon the  
Subject of Distinguishing between the Figurative and the Literal*

,NA MO GU RU MANYDZU {gh}O sh'A YA,

I bow down to Gentle Voice, my Lama.

,BDE 'BYUNG SPRIN LA ZHON DANG GSER GYI MNGAL, ,LUS MED BDAG  
PO THA GU'I LTO LA SOGS, ,SRID NA DREGS PA'I NGA RO CHER SGROGS  
PA'I, ,RLOM PAS 'GYING RNAMS KYIS KYANG GANG GI SKU, ,MTHONG  
BA'I MOD LA NYI MAS ME KHYER BZHIN, ,MDZAD PAR GYUR TSE MDZES  
PA'I COD PAN GYIS, ,GANG GI ZHABS PAD GUS PAS STEN BYED PA,  
,THUB DBANG LHA YI LHA LA PHYAG 'TSAL LO,

I bow down to Gentle Voice, my Lama.

Their roar of arrogance covers the world,  
And they strut with imagined self-importance:  
Source of Happiness, Rider on the Cloud,  
Child of the Golden Womb, Lord of Those  
Who Have No Body, Belly String, and the rest.  
But the minute they lay their eyes on your form  
It does to them what the sun does to a firefly,

And they throw themselves at your feet,  
Touching them with their lovely crowns.  
I bow down to you, Lord of the Able,  
God of all the gods.

,MKHYEN BRTZE'I GTING MTHA' SHIN TU DPAG PAR DKV'A, ,BYANG  
CHUB SPYOD PA'I RLABS CHEN CHAL CHIL YO, ,LEGS BSHAD RIN CHEN  
GTER GYUR 'JAM PA'I DBYANGS, ,RGYAL TSAB RGYA MTSO CHE LA GUS  
PHYAG 'TSAL,

I bow to the sea,  
To Gentle Voice and the Regent;  
The breadth and the depth of your knowledge  
And your compassion are something  
Ever so hard to fathom,  
And the great powerful waves  
Of your bodhisattva deeds  
Wash to the shore unceasing—  
You are truly a treasure trove of jewels,  
Of eloquence itself.

,BDER GSHEGS GSUNG RAB TSUL GNYIS SHING RTA'I SROL, ,LEGS PAR  
PHYE BAS RGYAL BA'I BSTAN PA MCHOG,SA GSUM 'GRO NA NYI LTAR  
GSAL MDZAD PA, ,KLU SGRUB THOGS MED ZHABS LA SPYI BOS 'DUD,

I bow and touch my head  
To the feet of Nagarjuna, and Asanga;  
You are like the sun itself,  
Illuminating those ultimate teachings  
Of Victors among all beings  
In all three of the realms,  
For you are the ones who have blazed the paths,  
The two ways of that highest speech  
Of Those Gone to Bliss:  
The systems of the innovators.

,SHING RTA CHEN PO'I SROL GNYIS LEGS BZUNG NAS, ,DZAM GLING  
BLO GSAL BYE BA'I MIG 'BYED PA, ,PHAGS PA LHA DANG DPA' BO  
SANGS RGYAS BSKYANGS, ,LEGS LDAN 'BYED DANG ZLA BA GRAGS PA'I  
ZHABS, ,DBYIG GNYEN ZHABS DANG BLO BRTAN PHYOGS GLANG

DANG , ,CHOS KYI GRAGS PA'I ZHABS SOGS 'DZAM GLING RGYAN,  
,THUB BSTAN MI NUB RGYAL MTSAN 'DZIN PA'I MCHOG,MKHAS PA'I  
DBANG PO RNAMS LA GUS PAS 'DUD,

With great respect I bow  
To those lords among all masters,  
To those highest beings who hold on high  
The banner of the teachings  
Of the Able Ones, and prevent them  
From sinking from the sky;  
To those who've opened the eyes of a trillion  
Thoughtful ones here in this world  
By keeping faithfully those two systems  
Of those two great innovators:  
I mean here the magnificent Aryadeva,  
Aryashura, Buddhapalita,  
Bhavaviveka, Chandrakirti,  
Vasubandhu, Stiramati,  
Dignaga, and Dharmakirti too.

,GZHUNG LUGS MANG THOS RIGS PA'I LAM DU'ANG , ,NGAL BA MANG  
BSTEN MNGON PAR RTOGS PA YI, ,YON TAN TSOGS KYIS MI DMAN DU  
MAS KYANG , ,'BAD KYANG RTOGS PAR MA GYUR GNAS DE NI, ,JAM  
MGON BLA MA'I DRIN GYIS LEGS MTHONG NAS, ,SHIN TU BRTZE BA'I  
BSAM PAS BDAG GIS BSHAD,

These are points that many with no little  
Mass of spiritual qualities—  
Filled with realizations won  
With much learning of great holy books  
And much pain spent in the ways  
Of reaching conclusions with reason—  
Have tried their best, but nonetheless  
Have failed to realize.  
Here though I will explain them,  
With thoughts of purest love,  
For I have seen them perfectly  
Through the kindness of my Lama,  
The Protector, the Gentle One.

,BSTAN PA'I DE NYID RTOGS PA'I RNAM DPYOD KYIS, ,SMRA BA ZLA  
MED 'DOD RNAMS GUS PAS NYON,

Please lend your ear then, those  
Who hope to become themselves  
Matchless teachers of the way  
With deep insights that realize  
The real nature revealed  
In the teachings of the Buddha.

,JI SKAD DU 'PHAGS PA YUL 'KHOR SKYONG GIS ZHUS PA LAS, ,STONG  
PA ZHI BA SKYE BA MED PA'I TSUL, ,MI SHES PAS NI 'GRO BA 'KHYAMS  
GYUR PA, ,DE DAG THUGS RJE MNGA' BAS THABS TSUL DANG , ,RIGS PA  
BRGYA DAG GIS NI 'DZUD PAR MDZAD,

Now the *Sutra Requested by the Realized Being Rashtrapala* says,

Different beings must wander here  
Because they have no knowledge  
Of the ways of emptiness,  
Of peace, and of things that never began.  
Those with compassion use skillful means  
And millions of different reasonings  
To bring them into it.

,CES CHOS RNAMS KYI DE BZHIN NYID NI SHIN TU RTOGS PAR DKA' BA  
DANG , MA RTOGS NA 'KHOR BA LAS MI GROL BAR GZIGS NAS THUGS  
RJE CAN GYI STON PAS THABS KYI TSUL DANG RIGS PA'I SGO DU MA  
ZHIG GIS DE KHONG DU CHUD BA LA 'DZUD PAR GSUNGS SO, ,

What these lines are saying is that the real nature of all things is something which is extremely difficult to perceive; and that if one fails to perceive it, one can never be freed from the circle of suffering. Our compassionate Teacher has seen these things clearly, and thus undertakes to bring beings on to a grasp of this real nature, using a great many skillful means, and a great many different types of reasoning.

DE'I PHYIR RNAM DPYOD DANG LDAN PA DAG GIS DE NYID JI LTAR YIN  
KHONG DU CHUD PA'I THABS LA 'BAD DGOS LA DE YANG RGYAL BA'I  
GSUNG RAB KYI DRANG BA DANG NGES PA'I DON RNAM PAR PHYED PA

LA RAG LAS SHING ,

For this reason, those with the capacity of insight should make great efforts in the various means of coming to a grasp of just what the real nature of things is. This, in turn, depends upon the ability to distinguish between what is figurative and what is literal among that highest of all spoken words--the speech of the victorious Buddhas.

DE GNYIS RNAM PAR 'BYED PA YANG 'DI NI DRANG BA'I DON NO 'DI NI NGES PA'I DON NO ZHES GSUNGS PA'I LUNG TZAM GYIS NUS PA MA YIN TE, GZHAN DU NA SHING RTA CHEN PO DAG GIS DRANG NGES 'BYED BA'I DGONGS 'GREL BRTZAMS PA DON MED PAR 'GYUR BA'I PHYIR DANG , GSUNG RAB LAS DRANG NGES KYI 'JOG TSUL MI MTHUN PA DU MA GSUNGS PA'I PHYIR DANG ,

The distinction between these two is not something that words themselves have the power to draw, saying "This part is figurative, and this part is literal." Otherwise it would have been a useless exercise for the great innovators to compose commentaries exploring the true intent of the teachings, undertaking to make distinctions between what was figurative and what was literal. Neither would there have been spoken, in that highest of spoken words itself, so many conflicting versions of how we decide what is figurative and what is literal.

'DI NI 'DI'O ZHES GSUNGS PA TZAM GYI LUNG GIS DE LTAR GZHAG PAR NI MI NUS LA DE'I TSE SPYI LA DE LTAR MA KHYAB PA NA BYE BRAG DRANG NGES LA YANG 'DI 'DI'O ZHES GSUNGS PA TZAM GYIS KYANG SGRUB PAR MI NUS PA'I PHYIR RO, ,

And look finally at the fact that--even if a scripture does say that "This is this way, and that is that way"--this still does not enable us to decide that it really is. If it is thus the case, throughout the teachings in general, that we cannot draw any unquestionable conclusions from such statements, then why should it be true--in this more particular case--that we can conclusively establish the distinction between the figurative and the literal from any particular reference that says, "This is the one, and this the other"?

DE'I PHYIR GSUNG RAB KYI DRANG NGES 'BYED PAR LUNG BSTAN PA'I SHING RTA CHEN PO DAG GIS DRANG NGES KYI DGONGS PA BKRAL ZHING DE YANG NGES DON GYI GSUNG RAB KYI DON GZHAN DU 'DREN PA LA GNOD BYED DANG , GZHAN DU DRANG DU MI RUNG BAR

DON DER NGES PA'I SGRUB BYED KYI RIGS PAS LEGS PAR GTAN LA  
PHAB PA ZHIG GI RJES SU 'BRANGS NAS DGONGS PA 'TSOL DGOS PAS  
MTHAR GTUGS NA DRI MA MED PA'I RIGS PA NYID KYIS DBYE DGOS TE,

Therefore we must go about our search for the true intent of the teachings by following the two great innovators--those who the scriptures foretold would be able to draw the distinction between the figurative and the literal. It is they who have unraveled for us the idea behind the figurative and the literal; it is they who have used true reasoning to establish, in a perfect way, those teachings which are literal--by finding proofs against any attempt to interpret them in some other light; and proofs in support of their being something literal, not something figurative, not something we could say refers to something else. In the end, we must learn to make this distinction through immaculate reasoning alone.

RIGS PA DANG 'GAL BA'I GRUB MTHA' KHAS LEN NA SMRA BA PO TSAD  
MA'I SKYES BUR MI RUNG BA'I PHYIR DANG , DNGOS PO'I DE KHO NA  
NYID KYANG 'THAD PAS SGRUB PA'I RIGS PA'I SGRUB BYED DANG LDAN  
PA'I PHYIR RO, ,

And this is true because anyone who espouses some philosophical system that contradicts reason could never be called a perfectly credible person; and because the very nature of things is, moreover, something that must be established by reason grounded in accurate perception.

DON GYI DBANG 'DI GZIGS NAS, ,DGE SLONG DAG GAM MKHAS RNAMS  
KYIS, ,BSREGS BCAD BRDAR BA'I GSER BZHIN DU, ,LEGS PAR BRTAGS LA  
NGA YI BKA', ,BLANG BAR BYA YI GUS PHYIR MIN, , ZHES GSUNGS SO, ,

Lord Buddha himself saw the truth of this highest form of meaning, and thus spoke the following:

Whether you are a monk or some other thinker,  
You must accept my words only after you've finished  
A careful examination of them, testing them like gold—  
In the fire, by cutting, and using the touchstone too.

DE LTAR NA DRANG NGES 'BYED PA LA GNYIS, MDO SDE DGONGS 'GREL  
LA BR TEN PA'I PHYOGS DANG , BLO GROS MI ZAD PAS BSTAN PA LA  
BR TEN PA'I PHYOGS SO, ,

And so it is that we proceed, in our task of distinguishing between the figurative and the literal, in two steps, presenting first the ideas of the side that uses the *Commentary on the True Intent of the Sutras* to help draw this distinction, and secondly the ideas of the side that uses the *Sutra Taught at the Request of Never-Ending Wisdom* to do so.

DANG PO LA GNYIS, MDO SDE NAS JI LTAR GSUNGS PA DGOD PA DANG  
, DE'I DON JI LTAR BKRAL BA'I TSUL LO,,

The first step has two parts of its own: setting forth what the sutra says, and showing how its meaning is commented upon.

DANG PO LA BZHI, MDO SDE LA 'GAL SPONG GI DRI BA, 'GAL BA DE  
SPONG BA'I LAN, NGO BO NYID GSUM GYI NGO BO NGOS GZUNG BA, DE  
DAG GIS GRUB PA'I DON ZHUS PA'O,,

The first of these parts has four further divisions: a question meant to clarify apparent contradictions in the sutras; an answer that clarifies these apparent contradictions; an identification of the nature of the three real natures; and a statement, offered by the bodhisattva, of the conclusion reached by these points.

DANG PO NI DGONGS 'GREL LAS, BCOM LDAN 'DAS KYIS RNAM  
GRANGS DU MAR PHUNG PO RNAMS KYI RANG GI MTSAN NYID KYANG  
BKA' STZAL, SKYE BA'I MTSAN NYID DANG , 'JIG PA'I MTSAN NYID DANG  
, SPANG BA DANG YONGS SU SHES PA YANG BKA' STZAL,

Here is the first. We find the following in the *Commentary on the True Intent*:

O Conqueror, you have in many of your presentations made statements that the heaps have some definitive characteristics of their own. You have also spoken of their characteristic of beginning, and their characteristic of being destroyed, and of eliminating and comprehending.

PHUNG PO RNAMS KYI JI LTA BA DE BZHIN DU SKYE MCHED RNAMS  
DANG RTEN CING 'BREL PAR 'BYUNG BA DANG ZAS RNAMS KYI BAR  
YANG BKA' STZAL,

You also stated that the way in which the heaps exist is the same for the doors of sense, and for things that occur through interdependence, and for everything up

to the different kinds of sustenance.

DE BZHIN DU SBYAR NAS BDEN PA RNAMS KYI RANG GI MTSAN NYID  
DANG YONGS SU SHES PA DANG SPANG BA DANG MNGON DU BGYI BA  
DANG BSGOM PA DANG KHAMS RNAMS KYI RANG GI MTSAN NYID  
DANG KHAMS SNA TSOGS PA DANG KHAMS DU MA DANG SPANG BA  
DANG YONGS SU SHES PA DANG ,

The question continues in the same pattern through the truths:

. . .And you stated that these truths were something that had definitive characteristics of their own, and were something which we should comprehend, and something we should eliminate, and something to bring about, and something to practice. And then you spoke of the categories as having some definitive characteristics of their own, and so too did you speak of the various categories, and the many categories, and of eliminating and comprehending.

BYANG PHYOGS SO BDUN GYI RANG GI MTSAN NYID DANG MI MTHUN  
PA DANG GNYEN PO DANG MA SKYES PA SKYE BA DANG SKYES PA  
GNAS PA DANG MI BSKYUD PA DANG SLAR ZHING 'BYUNG BA DANG  
'PHEL ZHING YANGS PA NYID KYANG BKA' STZAL LA,

The question turns too through the different groups among the 37 qualities of enlightenment:

. . .You spoke too of these qualities as having some definitive characteristics of their own, and you spoke of their nature of being inconsistent, and of being an antidote, and of the growth of what has not grown, and of the staying of what has grown, and of there being no separation, and of coming back, and of increasing, and of spreading.

BCOM LDAN 'DAS KYIS CHOS THAMS CAD NGO BO NYID MA  
MCHIS PA CHOS THAMS CAD MA SKYES PA MA 'GAGS PA GZOD  
MA NAS ZHI BA RANG BZHIN GYIS YONGS SU MYA NGAN LAS  
'DAS PA ZHES KYANG BKA' STZAL LAGS NA,

And you said, O Conqueror, that no existing thing could have any nature



of its own; you said that no existing thing ever began, or stopped; you said that they were, from the very beginning, in a state of peace; you said that they were, by nature, something that was completely beyond all grief.

BCOM LDAN 'DAS KYIS CI LA DGONGS NAS CHOS THAMS CAD  
NGO BO NYID MA MCHIS PA CHOS THAMS CAD MA SKYES PA MA  
'GAGS PA BZOD MA NAS ZHI BA RANG BZHIN GYIS YONGS SU  
MYA NGAN LAS 'DAS PA ZHES BKA' STZAL SNYAM BGYID LAGS  
TE,

What was it, O Conquering One, that you were truly thinking of when you said that no existing thing could have any nature of its own, and said that no existing thing ever began, or stopped; when you said that they were, from the very beginning, in a state of peace; when you said that they were, by nature, something that was completely beyond all grief?

BCOM LDAN 'DAS KYIS CI LA DGONGS NAS CHOS THAMS CAD  
NGO BO NYID MA MCHIS PA CHOS THAMS CAD MA SKYES PA MA  
'GAGS PA GZOD MA NAS ZHI BA RANG BZHIN GYIS YONGS SU  
MYA NGAN LAS 'DAS PA ZHES KYANG BKA' STZAL BA'I DON DE  
NYID BCOM LDAN 'DAS LA BDAG YONGS SU ZHU LAGS SO, , ZHES  
GSUNGS SO, ,

And so this is what I ask of you, O Conquering One: was it really that which the Conqueror had in mind when you said that no existing thing could have any nature of its own, and said that no existing thing ever began, or stopped; when you said that they were, from the very beginning, in a state of peace; when you said that they were, by nature, something that was completely beyond all grief?

'DIS NI MDO SDE KHA CIG TU CHOS THAMS CAD NGO BO NYID MED PA  
SOGS SU GSUNGS PA DANG , KHA CIG TU PHUNG PO LA SOGS PA'I  
RANG GI MTSAN NYID LA SOGS PA YOD PAR GSUNGS PA GNYIS SGRA  
SOR BZHAG NA 'GAL NA'ANG 'GAL BA MED DGOS PAS CI LA DGONGS  
NAS NGO BO NYID MED PA SOGS SU GSUNGS ZHES DRIS TE, DES NI  
RANG GI MTSAN NYID YOD PA SOGS SU GSUNGS PA YANG CI LA  
DGONGS NAS GSUNGS PA DON GYIS ZHUS SO, ,

The point of this question is as follows. In some sutras, Lord Buddha said that no existing thing had any nature of its own, and so on. In other sutras though he

said that the heaps and so on did have their own definitive characteristics, and so on. The bodhisattva knows that--if we take these two types of statements on face value--then they contradict each other; but that it cannot be the case that they do. Therefore he is asking Lord Buddha what he really had in mind when he said that no existing thing could have any nature of its own, and so on. The bodhisattva is, by implication, asking just what Lord Buddha meant by phrases such as "existing by definition" and the like.

'DIR RANG GI MTSAN NYID CES PA RGYA NAG GI 'GREL CHEN SOGS LAS THUN MONG MA YIN PA'I MTSAN NYID LA BSHAD PA NI RIGS PA MA YIN TE, MDO NYID LAS KUN BRTAGS KYI SKABS SU RANG GI MTSAN NYID GYIS GRUB PA LA GSAL BAR GSUNGS PA'I PHYIR DANG , KUN BRTAGS LA'ANG THUN MONG MA YIN PA'I MTSAN BYED YOD PAS MTSAN NYID NGO BO NYID MED PA KUN BRTAGS LA BSHAD DU MI RUNG BA'I SKYON DU 'GYUR BA'I PHYIR RO,,

The term here "definitive characteristic" or "definition" [in "having definitive characteristics" or "existing by definition"] has been explained in the great Chinese commentary and elsewhere as referring to the particular verbal definition of a thing. This idea though is incorrect, since—for one thing—the sutra itself clearly refers to the idea of existing *by definition* in the parts where it talks about constructs. Furthermore, even constructs have their own particular verbal descriptions which are used to define them; so if this were the meaning of "definition" here then there would be a problem if we went on to describe them as not having any nature or definitive characteristics of their own.

KHAMS SNA TSOGS PA DANG DU MA LA 'GREL PA RNAMS KYIS GZHAN DU BSHAD KYANG 'OG NAS 'BYUNG BA'I MDO DANG SBYAR NA KHAMS BCO BRGYAD DANG KHAMS DRUG LA BYA'O, , MI BSKYUD PA NI MI BRJED PA'O,,

Various commentaries have described the phrases "various categories" and "many categories" otherwise, but if we refer down to what comes later in the sutra itself then we should take them to mean the eighteen categories and the six categories, respectively. The phrase "being no separation" refers to not losing something.

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[The following selection is taken from folios 3b-8a in the ACIP digital edition (catalog number S5396), and pp. 7-18 in the ACIP Indian paper edition.]

GNYSIS PA LA GNYIS, NGO BO NYID MED TSUL GANG LA DGONGS NAS  
NGO BO NYID MED PAR GSUNGS PA BSHAD PA DANG , GANG LA  
DGONGS NAS MA SKYES PA SOGS SU GSUNGS PA BSHAD PA'O, , DANG  
PO LA GSUM, MDOR BSTAN PA DANG , RGYAS PAR BSHAD PA DANG , DE  
DAG GI DPE BSTAN PA'O, , DANG PO NI,

The second division, an answer that clarifies apparent contradictions in the sutras, has two further sections of its own: an explanation of just what "lack of a self nature" it was that Lord Buddha had in mind when he said that nothing had any nature of its own; and what it was that he had in mind when he said "nothing grows" and the like.

We cover the first section in three steps: a brief presentation, an expanded explanation, and illustrations for the points covered. Here is the first.

DGONGS 'GREL LAS, DON DAM YANG DAG 'PHAGS, NGAS CHOS RNAMS  
KYI NGO BO NYID MED PA NYID RNAM PA GSUM PO 'DI LTA STE, MTSAN  
NYID NGO BO NYID MED PA NYID DANG SKYE BA NGO BO NYID MED PA  
NYID DANG DON DAM PA NGO BO NYID MED PA NYID LA DGONGS NAS  
CHOS THAMS CAD NGO BO NYID MED PA'O, , ZHES BSTAN TO ZHES  
NGO BO NYID MED PA GSUM GA LA DGONGS NAS NGO BO NYID MED  
PAR GSUNGS SO,

Lord Buddha replies by saying that, when he stated that nothing had any nature of its own, he was actually referring to all three lacks of a self nature; as the *True Intent of the Sutras* itself reads,

Listen, Paramarta Samudgata. When I said that no existing object at all had any nature of its own, what I was referring to was three different lacks of a self nature that existing things exhibit. These three are the quality of lacking any definitive nature, the quality of lacking any nature of growing, and the quality of lacking any nature of being ultimate.

,BSDU BA LAS KYANG , BCOM LDAN 'DAS KYIS CI LA DGONGS NAS CHOS  
THAMS CAD NGO BO NYID MED PA ZHES GSUNGS SHE NA, SMRAS PA  
'DUL BA'I DBANG GIS DE DANG DER NGO BO NYID MED PA NYID RNAM

PA GSUM LA DGONGS NAS GSUNGS TE ZHES GSUNGS SHING ,

The *Abbreviation* also says:

What was it that the Conqueror had in mind when he said that no existing thing had any nature of its own? I will tell you; he spoke of that to disciples of varying capacities, and what he had in mind was the three different kinds of a lack of self-nature. . .

SUM CU PA LAS KYANG , NGO BO NYID NI RNAM GSUM GYI , NGO BO NYID MED RNAM GSUM PA, , DGONGS NAS CHOS RNAMS THAMS CAD NI, , NGO BO NYID MED BSTAN PA YIN, , ZHES GSUNGS PAS GANG DAG SHER PHYIN LA SOGS PA'I MDO RNAMS LAS CHOS THAMS CAD NGO BO NYID MED PAR GSUNGS PA KUN RDZOB KYI CHOS THAMS CAD LA DGONGS KYI DON DAM PA LA DGONGS PA MIN NO ZHES 'CHAD PA NI DGONGS 'GREL DANG THOGS MED SKU MCHED KYI GZHUNG DANG 'GAL ZHING 'PHAGS PA YAB SRAS LA SOGS PA'I LUGS LAS KYANG PHYI ROL TU GYUR PA'O, ,

The *Thirty Verses* says as well:

There are three different forms of this self-nature;  
And what Lord Buddha had in mind  
When he said that no existing object  
Had any nature of its own  
Was that there were on the other hand  
Three different lacks of a self-nature too.

Let us consider, in light of these different references, the explanation by certain people that—when Lord Buddha stated, in sutras such as those on the perfection of wisdom, that no existing object had any nature of its own—he was thinking only of every existing object belonging to the deceptive type, and not of those belonging to the ultimate type. Anyone who holds this position thus contradicts both the *Commentary on the True Intent* and the classics of Master Asanga and his brother; they have moreover left behind them the system followed by the realized father and his spiritual son [the realized being Nagarjuna, and Master Aryadeva], and all the others as well.

'DI LTAR CI LA DGONGS NAS NGO BO NYID MED PAR GSUNGS PA DRIS PA NI CI LA BSAMS NAS NGO BO NYID MED PAR BSTAN PA DANG NGO

BO NYID MED TSUL DRIS PA YIN LA LAN GYIS KYANG DE GNYIS RIM PA  
BZHIN STON PA LAS DANG PO 'CHAD PA NI,

When the bodhisattva asks Lord Buddha what he had in mind when he said that objects had no nature of their own, he is really asking two different things: what Lord Buddha meant by the expression "no-self-nature," and how it is that nothing has any such nature. The answer by Lord Buddha addresses both of these points as well, one after the other. We begin by explaining the first.

GZUGS NAS RNAM MKHYEN GYI BAR GYI CHOS RNAMS KYI GSAL BA'I  
DBYE BA MTHA' YAS PA LA NGO BO NYID DAM RANG BZHIN MED DO  
ZHES GSUNGS PA RNAMS NGO BO NYID MED PA GSUM DU 'DU ZHING  
DE'I NGO BO NYID MED TSUL BSHAD NA GO SLA BAR DGONGS NAS  
NGO BO MED PA GSUM DU BSDUS TE, DON DAM PA DANG KUN RDZOB  
PA'I CHOS THAMS CAD DE GSUM GYIS BSDUS SO, ,

Consider all the infinite variety of objects that Lord Buddha was referring to when he said that none of the existing things from physical matter up to the omniscience of an enlightened being had any nature or quality of its own. Lord Buddha grouped them into three different types of things with no nature of their own, for two reasons: first because they are all subsumed by these three types of things with no nature of their own, and secondly because it would then be easier to teach disciples how it was that they lacked any nature of their own. And this is because every existing object, whether it be something of the ultimate kind or the deceptive kind, is included within one of these three types.

DE LTAR MDZAD DGOS PA YANG YUM GYI MDO LA SOGS PAR PHUNG  
PO LNGA KHAMS BCO BRGYAD SKYE MCHED BCU GNYIS KYI CHOS  
THAMS CAD LA RE RE NAS DNGOS PO MED PA DANG RANG BZHIN MED  
PA DANG NGO BO NYID MED PAR GSUNGS SHING , KHYAD PAR DU  
STONG PA NYID DANG CHOS KYI DBYINGS DANG DE BZHIN NYID LA  
SOGS PA DON DAM PA'I RNAM GRANGS THAMS CAD SMOS NAS DE DAG  
LA NGO BO NYID MED PAR GSUNGS PAS MDO SDE DE DAG LAS CHOS  
RNAMS NGO BO NYID MED PAR GSUNGS PA'I CHOS KYI NANG NA DON  
DAM MED DO ZHES SEMS DANG LDAN PA SU ZHIG SMRA,

Here's another reason why this is true. Lord Buddha stated, in the sutras of the Mother and others as well, that none of the individual members of the following groups had any nature of being a thing: neither the five heaps, nor the eighteen categories, nor the twelve doors of sense. He said none of them had any nature of

being a thing, none had any quality of its own, and none had any nature of its own. More specifically, he mentioned by name all the different versions of the ultimate: emptiness, the sphere of being, the way things are, and so on--and then he went on to say that none of them had any nature of its own. What person in their right mind then could ever say that there were no things of the ultimate type among those objects of which Lord Buddha spoke?

GNYIS PA NI, GAL TE NGO BO NYID MED PAR GSUNGS PA'I CHOS  
RNAMS NGO BO NYID MED PA GSUM DU SDUD NA DE GSUM GANG YIN  
NGO BO NYID MED TSUL JI LTAR YIN SNYAM NA NGO BO NYID MED PA  
DANG PO BSHAD PA NI DGONGS 'GREL LAS, DE LA CHOS RNAMS KYI  
MTSAN NYID NGO BO NYID MED PA NYID GANG ZHE NA, KUN BRTAGS  
PA'I MTSAN NYID GANG YIN PA'O, ,

Here next is the second step: the expanded explanation. Now you might think to yourself,

Consider all those things that Lord Buddha was talking about when he said that nothing had any nature of its own. Suppose they are all included within the three different types of things that have no nature of their own. What then are these three types of things, and how is it that they lack any nature of their own?

Let's begin by explaining the first type of thing that has no nature of its own. The *Commentary on the True Intent* says,

Suppose you ask what we mean when we speak of the quality of being a thing that "lacks any definitive nature." Here we are referring to those things that display the attribute of being a construct.

DE CI'I PHYIR ZHE NA, 'DI LTAR DE NI MING DANG BRDAS RNAM PAR  
BZHAG PA'I MTSAN NYID YIN GYI RANG GI MTSAN NYID KYIS RNAM  
PAR GNAS PA NI MA YIN PAS DE'I PHYIR DE NI MTSAN NYID NGO BO  
NYID MED PA NYID CES BYA'O ZHES GSUNGS TE,

And why do we speak of them as such? It is because of the fact that these things display the attribute of being established through names and terms; they are not things which abide by definition; thus can we say of them that they "lack any definitive nature."

TSIG DANG PO GNYIS KYI DRIS LAN GYIS KUN BRTAGS MTSAN NYID  
NGO BO NYID MED PAR BSHAD NAS, DE CI'I PHYIR ZHE NA ZHES PAS  
DE'I RGYU MTSAN DRIS PA'I LAN DU DGAG PHYOGS NAS RANG GI  
MTSAN NYID KYIS MA GRUB PA DANG SGRUB PHYOGS NAS MING  
DANG BRDAS BZHAG PA YIN PA'I RGYU MTSAN GSUNGS SO, , MDO YI  
DMIGS 'BYED PA 'DIS 'OG MA GNYIS KYANG SHES PAR BYA'O, ,

The question and answer that appear in the first two sentences serve to identify constructs as what are being referred to when we speak of "things that lack any definitive nature." The part that begins with "And why do we speak of them as such?" serves as an answer to the question of what reason there is for us to describe them as such. Then Lord Buddha answers by giving us two reasons: one from the negative point of view, where he says that these things do not exist by definition; and one from the positive point of view, where he says that they are established through names and terms. The way in which the sutra approaches the question from these two different aspects can be understood to apply to the latter two attributes as well.

KUN BRTAGS LA MED RGYU'I MTSAN NYID KYI NGO BO NYID NI RANG  
GI MTSAN NYID KYIS GRUB PA'AM GNAS PA LA BYA'O, ,

The definitive nature of their own which constructs lack refers to their existing, or abiding, by definition.

'DIR RANG GI MTSAN NYID KYIS YOD MED BSTAN TSOD NI MING DANG  
BRDA LA LTOS NAS BZHAG MA BZHAG YIN LA, BZHAG PA LA YANG  
YOD PAS MA KHYAB CING 'JOG LUGS KYANG THAL 'GYUR BAS YOD PA  
RNAMS MING GI THA SNYAD KYI DBANG GIS BZHAG PA DANG CHES MI  
MTHUN PAS RANG GI MTSAN NYID KYIS YOD MED KYI DON YANG MI  
MTHUN NO, ,

Here the question of whether something is said to exist by definition or not hinges on whether or not it is established through names and terms; and it is not necessarily the case that those things which are so established even exist at all. What is meant by this "establishing" is furthermore quite different from what the Consequence group means when it says that all existing objects are established by virtue of terms that are names; and what it means then to exist by definition or not is also something different.

'ON KYANG 'DI'I RANG MTSAN KYIS YOD PAR 'DZIN PA YOD NA THAL  
'GYUR BA'I RANG MTSAN GYIS GRUB PAR 'DZIN PA YANG YOD LA GZHI  
'GA' ZHIG SNGA MA LTAR MI 'DZIN KYANG PHYI MA LTAR 'DZIN PA NI  
YOD DO, ,

It is however the case that--if one is holding things to exist definitively as it is described in this school--one is also holding things to exist by definition as it is described by the Consequence group; whereas with a certain number of objects one may still hold them in the latter way yet still not hold them in the former way.

NGO BO NYID MED PA GNYIS PA NI DGONGS 'GREL LAS, CHOS RNAMS  
KYI SKYE BA NGO BO NYID MED PA NYID GANG ZHE NA, CHOS RNAMS  
KYI GZHAN GYI DBANG GI MTSAN NYID GANG YIN PA'O, ,

Here is what the second lack of a self-nature refers to. The *Commentary on the True Intent of the Sutras* says:

Suppose you ask what we mean when we speak of the quality of being a thing that "lacks any nature of growing." Here we are referring to those things that display the attribute of being a dependent thing.

DE CI'I PHYIR ZHE NA, 'DI LTAR DE NI RKYEN GZHAN GYI STOBS KYIS  
BYUNG BA YIN GYI BDAG NYID KYIS MA YIN PAS DE'I PHYIR DE NI SKYE  
BA NGO BO NYID MED PA NYID CES BYA'O ZHES GSUNGS SO, ,

And why do we speak of them as such? It is because of the fact that these things have occurred by virtue of other factors, and not all by themselves, that we say of them that they "lack any nature of growing."

GZHAN DBANG LA MED RGYU'I SKYE BA'I NGO BO'AM NGO BO NYID  
KYIS SKYE BA NI BDAG NYID KYIS MA YIN PAS ZHES GSUNGS PAS BDAG  
NYID KYIS SKYE BA'O, ,

Given the phrase about "not all by themselves," the nature of growing that dependent things lack, or their growing through some nature of their own, refers to their growing all by themselves.



DE NI RANG DBANG GIS SKYE BA YIN TE, BSDU BA LAS, 'DU BYED  
RNAMS NI RTEN CING 'BREL PAR 'BYUNG BA YIN PA'I PHYIR RKYEN GYI  
STOBS KYIS SKYE BA YIN GYI RANG GI SKYE BA NI SKYE BA NGO BO  
NYID MED PA NYID CES BYA'O, , ZHES GSUNGS PA LTAR RO, ,

This would be a kind of growing where they grew independently, for as the  
*Abbreviation* says,

Because things which are factors occur through interdependence,  
we say that they grow by virtue of their conditions; when we say  
that these are the type that "lack any nature of growing," we are  
talking about their growing on their own.

GZHAN DBANG LA RANG BZHIN GYIS SKYE BA DE 'DRA BA'I NGO BO  
NYID MED PAS NGO BO NYID MED PAR GSUNGS KYI RANG GI MTSAN  
NYID KYIS GRUB PA MED PAS NGO BO NYID MED PAR GSUNGS PA MIN  
PA'I LUGS SO, ,

Remember, this is a system which says that dependent things were spoken to  
lack any nature of their own because they have no nature of growing in this way;  
that is, through some quality of their own. They do not though say that  
something has no nature of its own just because it does not exist by definition.

NGO BO NYID MED PA GSUM PA LA 'JOG TSUL GNYIS LAS GZHAN  
DBANG LA DON DAM PA NGO BO NYID MED PAR BZHAG PA NI  
DGONGS 'GREL LAS, CHOS RNAMS KYI DON DAM PA NGO BO NYID MED  
PA GANG ZHE NA, RTEN CING 'BREL PAR 'BYUNG BA'I CHOS GANG DAG  
SKYE BA NGO BO NYID MED PA NYID KYIS NGO BO NYID MED PA DE  
DAG NI DON DAM PA NGO BO NYID MED PA NYID KYIS NGO

BO NYID MED PA YANG YIN NO, ,

There are two different ways of establishing the third lack of a self-nature; here is  
how we establish the fact that dependent things have no nature of being  
ultimate. The *Commentary on the True Intent* says:

Suppose you ask what we mean when we say that things "lack any  
nature of being ultimate." Consider those things which occur  
through interdependence; those which lack any nature in the sense  
that they lack any nature of growing. These are as well that which

lacks any nature in the sense of lacking any nature of being ultimate.

DE CI'I PHYIR ZHE NA, DON DAM YANG DAG 'PHAGS, CHOS RNAMS LA RNAM PAR DAG PA'I DMIGS PA GANG YIN PA DE NI DON DAM PA YIN PAR YONGS SU BSTAN LA, GZHAN GYI DBANG GI MTSAN NYID DE RNAM PAR DAG PA'I DMIGS PA MA YIN PAS DE'I PHYIR DON DAM PA NGO BO NYID MED PA NYID CES BYA'O,, ZHES GSUNGS SO,,

And why do we speak of them as such? Listen, Paramarta Samudgata. What I have professed so thoroughly is that the "ultimate" refers to the part of things which is the object of [the path of] total purity. Because those that display the attribute of being a dependent thing are not the object of [the path of] total purity, we can speak of them as that one that lacks any nature of being ultimate.

GZHAN DBANG NI DON DAM PA'I NGO BO NYID DU MED PAS DON DAM PA NGO BO NYID MED PA ZHES BYA STE, DON DAM PA NI GANG LA DMIGS NAS GOMS NA SGRIB PA ZAD PAR 'GYUR BA YIN NA GZHAN DBANG LA DMIGS NAS GOMS PAS SGRIB PA DAG PAR BYED MI NUS PA'I PHYIR RO,,

It is because dependent things do not exist as things which have any nature of being ultimate that we can speak of that which does not have any nature of being ultimate. The point here is that "ultimate" refers to anything which, when you focus on and meditate upon it, your spiritual obstacles are brought to an end. Dependent things though cannot be described as such, since they do not have the power to help you purify yourself of your spiritual obstacles if you focus on and meditate upon them.

'O NA KUN BRTAGS KYANG DON DAM PA NGO BO NYID MED PAR CI'I PHYIR MI GZHAG CE NA, RNAM PAR DAG PA'I DMIGS PA MA YIN PA TZAM GYIS 'JOG NA BDEN YANG LOG RTOG DGAG PA LA LTOS NAS GZHAN DBANG RNAM PAR DAG PA'I DMIGS PA MIN PAS DON DAM NGO BO NYID MED PAR BZHAG GI KUN BRTAGS MA BZHAG GO ,

"Now why," one may ask, "do you not also establish constructs as being something which has no nature of being ultimate?" It's true that--if we were to establish something as being such solely on the basis of its not being an object of

[the path of] total purity--then we would have to do so. It is due to the fact that we are attempting to stop wrong ideas though that we do establish dependent things as things which--because they are not objects of [the path] of total purity--have no nature of being ultimate; but do not establish constructs as things which are this way.

JI LTAR ZHE NA, GZHAN DBANG KUN BRTAGS KYIS STONG PA LA  
DMIGS NAS BSGOMS PAS SGRIB PA DAG BAR 'GYUR BAR SHES PA NA, DE  
LTA NA CHOS CAN GZHAN DBANG LA YANG DMIGS DGOS PAS DE  
YANG RNAM PAR DAG PA'I DMIGS PAR 'GYUR BAS DON DAM PAR 'GYUR  
RO SNYAM DU DOGS PA SKYE LA KUN BRTAGS LA DE 'DRA BA'I DOGS  
PA MED PA'I PHYIR RO, ,

Why is this the case? Suppose that a person came to an understanding that they could purify themselves of their spiritual obstacles by focusing on, and then meditating upon, the fact that dependent things are empty of [certain] constructs. It is possible then that they might entertain the thought that--because to go through this process they had to focus upon dependent things as an example--then these same dependent things would be objects of [the path of] total purity. This in turn would mean that these dependent things were ultimate. A person would not though entertain this same thought about constructs.

DOGS PA DE'I SKYON NI MED DE SGRA MI RTAG PAR NGES PAS SGRA  
RTAG 'DZIN ZLOG KYANG SGRA LA DMIGS PAS RTAG 'DZIN MI ZLOG PA  
MI 'GAL BA BZHIN NO, ,

There is in actuality by the way no problem that this particular thought might be correct. It's similar to the case where a person is able to stop his tendency of believing that sound is an unchanging thing once he has perceived that it is a changing thing. There is no contradiction in this example if one were to say though that you would not stop your tendency of believing that sound is an unchanging thing [simply] by focusing on sound.

GZHAN DBANG RNAM PAR DAG PA'I DMIGS PA LA DON DAM DU BYAS  
PA'I DON DAM DER MA GRUB KYANG DON DAM GZHAN DU GRUB MA  
GRUB NI 'CHAD PAR 'GYUR RO, ,

Despite the fact that dependent things do not exist as something ultimate in the sense of being ultimate by virtue of being the object of [the path of] total purity, there still remains the question of whether they exist as something ultimate in

other senses; we will cover this further on.

DON DAM PA NGO BO NYID MED PA'I 'JOG TSUL GNYIS PA YANG  
DGONGS 'GREL LAS, GZHAN YANG CHOS RNAMS KYI YONGS SU GRUB  
PA'I MTSAN NYID GANG YIN PA DE YANG DON DAM PA NGO BO NYID  
MED PA NYID CES BYA'O, ,

This second way of establishing something as a thing that lacks any nature of being ultimate is, further, described as follows in the *Commentary on the True Intent*:

Moreover, we also refer to that attribute of totality which things have as being their "quality of lacking any nature of being ultimate."

DE CI'I PHYIR ZHE NA, DON DAM YANG DAG 'PHAGS, CHOS RNAMS KYI  
CHOS BDAG MED PA GANG YIN PA DE NI, DE DAG GI NGO BO NYID MED  
PA NYID CES BYA STE DE NI DON DAM PA YIN LA DON DAM PA NI CHOS  
THAMS CAD KYI NGO BO NYID MED PA NYID KYIS RAB TU PHYE BA YIN  
PAS DE'I PHYIR DON DAM PA NGO BO NYID MED PA NYID CES BYA'O, ,  
ZHES GSUNGS SO, ,

And why do we speak of them as such? Listen, Paramarta Samudgata. We refer to that lack of a self-nature of objects which all things have as being their "lack of a nature of their own." The "ultimate" is delineated by being that simple lack that every existing thing has of any nature of its own; and this is why we can speak of the quality of lacking any nature of being ultimate.

CHOS RNAMS KYI CHOS KYI BDAG MED YONGS GRUB NI RNAM PAR  
DAG PA'I DMIGS PA YIN PAS DON DAM PA YANG YIN LA, CHOS RNAMS  
KYI BDAG GI NGO BO NYID MED PAS RAB TU PHYE BA STE DE TZAM  
GYIS BZHAG PA YIN PA'I PHYIR CHOS RNAMS KYI NGO BO NYID MED PA  
ZHES KYANG BYA BAS DON DAM PA NGO BO NYID MED PA ZHES BYA'O,  
,

Totality in the sense of the lack of a self-nature of objects which all things exhibit is an object of [the path of] total purity, and is thus on one count something ultimate. But it is also delineated by the lack that things have of any self-nature of the person, by this simple absence of something; and this is why we can speak

of all things as "lacking any nature of their own." This too is a reason why we can say that things "lack any nature of being ultimate."

YANG DGONGS 'GREL LAS, GAL TE 'DU BYED KYI MTSAN NYID DANG DON DAM PA'I MTSAN NYID THA DAD PA YIN PAR GYUR NA NI, DES NA 'DU BYED RNAMS KYI BDAG MED PA TZAM DANG NGO BO NYID MED PA TZAM NYID DON DAM PA'I MTSAN NYID YIN PAR YANG MI 'GYUR, ZHES GSUNGS SHING ,

This point is supported by the *Commentary on the True Intent* where it says,

If the characteristic of being a factor and the characteristic of being ultimate were unconnected, then there is no way that the simple lack of a self-nature to factors and their simple lack of a nature of their own could be their attribute of being ultimate.

DPE'I SKABS SU YANG NAM MKHA' GZUGS MED PA TZAM LA 'JOG PA BZHIN DU BDAG MED 'JOG PAR GSUNGS PAS, CHOS CAN 'DUS BYAS LA CHOS KYI BDAG RNAM PAR BCAD TZAM GYI SPROS PA MED DGAG LA CHOS KYI BDAG MED KYI YONGS GRUB 'JOG PAR SHIN TU GSAL BA'I PHYIR,

The point is also supported by the fact that, in the sections where an illustration is used, it is stated that the lack of a self-nature is established in the same way as we establish empty space; that is, as being the simple lack of any physical matter. It is therefore extremely clear that totality, in the form of the lack of a self-nature to objects, is established for produced things as being the simple absence of their imagined self-existence: the raw exclusion of some self-nature to objects.

MDO 'DI'I DE KHO NA NYID KYI DON BSTAN PA NGES PA'I DON DU 'DOD BZHIN DU 'GYUR MED YONGS GRUB DGAG BYA BCAD TZAM GYI BCAD LDOG NAS MI 'JOG PAR BLO'I YUL DU 'CHAR BA DGAG BYA BCAD PA LA MI LTOS PAR SGRUB PA RANG DBANG BA LA 'DOD PA NI 'GAL BA'O, ,

It is a complete contradiction on this subject to assert, on the one hand, that the descriptions of thusness in this sutra are to be taken as literal; and on the other hand to assert that this changeless totality is a self-standing, positive object: one which is not established simply as the result of a process of exclusion--the simple exclusion of what we deny when we speak of "no-self," and something which we picture as an object in our minds only by relying on the act of excluding what we

deny by "no-self."

YONGS GRUB 'DI NI CHOS RNAMS KYI BDAG GI NGO BO RNAM PAR  
BCAD PA TZAM YIN PAS CHOS RNAMS KYI DON DAM PA NGO BO NYID  
MED PA ZHES GSUNGS KYI DGAG PA'I RANG GI NGO BO LA RANG GI  
MTSAN NYID KYIS GRUB PA MED PAS NGO BO NYID MED PAR MI BZHED  
PA'I LUGS SO, ,

Remember that this is a school where we say that totality is the simple exclusion of a self-nature with regard to all things; and this is why Lord Buddha spoke of the "lack of a nature of being ultimate." It is not though the case that the school asserts that this absence has no nature of its own for the reason that it has a nature that lacks any quality of existing by definition.

GSUM PA NI, NGO BO NYID MED PA GSUM PO DE DPE DI DANG 'DRA BA  
NI DGONGS 'GREL LAS, DE LA 'DI LTA STE DPER NA NAM KHA'I ME TOG  
JI LTA BA DE LTA BUR NI MTSAN NYID NGO BO NYID MED PA NYID  
BLTA BAR BYA'O, ,

Here finally is the third step: illustrations for the points covered. These three lacks of a self-nature can be described with three different illustrations. The *Commentary on the True Intent* begins by saying,

You can view the quality of lacking any definitive nature as being like the illustration of a flower that grows in mid-air.

DON DAM YANG DAG 'PHAGS, DE LA 'DI LTA STE DPER NA SGYU MA  
BYAS PA JI LTA BA DE LTA BUR NI SKYE BA NGO BO NYID MED PA NYID  
BLTA BAR BYA'O, , DON DAM PA NGO BO NYID MED PA NYID DE LAS  
KYANG GCIG KYANG BLTA BAR BYA'O, ,

It is, O Paramarta Samudgata, like this: you can view the quality of not having any nature of growing as being like the illustration of a magic show. And as for the quality of not having of any nature of being ultimate, you can view it in yet a different way from those.

DON DAM YANG DAG 'PHAGS, DE LA 'DI LTA STE DPER NA NAM MKHA'  
NI GZUGS KYI NGO BO NYID MED PA TZAM GYIS RAB TU PHYE BA DANG  
THAMS CAD DU SONG BA JI LTA BA DE LTA BU NI DON DAM PA NGO BO  
NYID MED PA DE LAS CHOS BDAG MED PAS RAB TU PHYE BA DANG

THAMS CAD DU SONG BA GCIG BLTA BAR BYA STE, ZHES SO, ,

It is, O Paramarta Samudgata, like this: you can view this quality as being like the illustration of empty space, which is delineated by being a simple lack of anything with a physical nature, and which extends to all things. The lack of having any nature of being ultimate is the same: this particular quality is, in a way different from those others, delineated by being a lack of any self-nature to objects, and also extends to all things.

KUN BRTAGS NAM KHA'I ME TOG DANG 'DRA BA NI RTOG PAS BTAGS  
PA TZAM GYI DPE YIN GYI SHES BYA LA MI SRID PA'I DPE MIN NO, ,  
GZHAN DBANG SGYU MA DANG 'DRA TSUL NI 'CHAD PAR 'GYUR LA  
YONGS GRUB KYI DPE DON NI DKYUS NA GSAL LO, ,

Saying that constructs are similar to a flower that grows in mid-air is only meant to illustrate how they exist merely in the imagination; the point is not to give an example of something that doesn't exist in the universe. The way in which dependent things are similar to a magic trick we will explain later on, and the point of the illustration used for totality is clear from the context in which it appears.

NGO BO NYID MED PAR GSUNGS PA'I NGO BO NYID MED TSUL NI DE  
LTAR DU BSHAD KYI DE LTA MIN PAR NGO BO NYID GSUM GA RANG GI  
MTSAN NYID KYIS MA GRUB PA LA NGO BO NYID MED PAR BSHAD NA  
NGO BO NYID MED PAR GSUNGS PA'I MDO SDE LA SGRA JI BZHIN PAR  
ZHEN PA YIN LA, DE LTA NA MED LTA'AM CHAD PAR LTA BA THOB PAR  
'GYUR TE NGO BO NYID GSUM GA LA SKUR BA 'DEBS PAS MTSAN NYID  
MED PAR LTA BA CAN DU 'GYUR BA'I PHYIR RO, ,

This is the way one should explain how it is that things lack any nature of their own when the sutra speaks of a "lack of any nature of their own." If on the other hand one were to say that "lacking any nature of their own" meant that none of the three natures existed by definition, then you would be expressing the belief that the sutras which state that nothing has any nature of its own are to be taken to mean exactly what they say. This would amount to espousing the view that nothing exists, or the view that everything has discontinued. This in turn would be discounting the existence of all three of the natures; and we could say then that you had turned into one of those people who holds the view that nothing has any definitive characteristics at all.

'DI LTAR GZHAN DBANG RANG GI MTSAN NYID KYIS GRUB PA MED NA SKYE BA DANG 'GAG PA MI RUNG BAS DE LA SKUR PA 'DEBS PA YIN LA YONGS GRUB RANG GI MTSAN NYID KYIS MED NA DNGOS PO'I GSHIS SU MI 'GYUR BA'I LUGS SO,,

How this works, according to this school, is the following: if it were not the case that there were any dependent things that existed by definition, then they could never grow or stop--and one would thus be discounting their existence. If there were no examples of totality that existed by definition, then this could never be the core nature of every functional thing.

GAL TE RANG GI MTSAN NYID KYIS MA GRUB PAR LTA BA NGO BO NYID GZHAN GNYIS LA SKUR 'DEBS YIN DU CHUG KYANG KUN BRTAGS LA SKUR 'DEBS SU JI LTAR 'GYUR SNYAM NA,

Suppose, on this point, one were to raise the following question:

I can see how—if one were to hold the viewpoint that they did not exist by definition—one would be discounting the existence of the two natures. How is it though that you would be discounting the existence of constructs?

NGO BO NYID GZHAN GNYIS RANG GI MTSAN NYID KYIS MED NA DE GNYIS MED PAR 'GYUR LA DE LTA NA KUN BRTAGS 'DOGS PA'I GZHI DANG 'DOGS PA PO'I THA SNYAD KYANG MED PAS KUN BRTAGS YE MED DU 'GYUR BA'I PHYIR RO,,

The point is that, if it were the case that the two natures did not exist by definition, then they could never exist at all. And if they did not exist, then there would be no object towards which we apply the constructs, and none of the terms that the one who applies the constructs uses. Constructs themselves then would become something that did not exist at all.

DE LTAR YANG DGONGS 'GREL LAS, NGA'I DGONGS TE BSHAD PA ZAB MO YANG DAG PA JI LTA BA BZHIN TU RAB TU MI SHES TE CHOS DE LA MOS KYANG CHOS 'DI DAG THAMS CAD NI NGO BO NYID MED PA KHO NA YIN NO,, CHOS 'DI DAG THAMS CAD NI MA SKYES PA KHO NA'O,, MA 'GAGS PA KHO NA'O,, GZOD MA NAS ZHI BA KHO NA'O,, RANG BZHIN GYIS YONGS SU MYA NGAN LAS 'DAS PA KHO NA'O ZHES CHOS



KYI DON LA SGRA JI BZHIN KHO NAR MNGON PAR ZHEN PAR BYED DO,

In this same vein, the *Commentary on the True Intent* says:

I will explain to you my true intent. It may be the case that you believe in things, that you fail to grasp fully the profound and pure way that things really are. And then you will come to believe, firmly, that I only meant exactly what I said about the nature of all things when I said the following:

None of these things at all has any nature of its own; and they are no other way. None of these things at all ever grows; and they are no other way. None of them ever stops; and they are no other way. They are extinct, and have been so from the very beginning; and they are no other way. They have, by their very nature, gone completely beyond the state of grief; and they are no other way.

DE DAG GZHI DES NA CHOS THAMS CAD LA MED PAR LTA BA DANG  
MTSAN NYID MED PAR LTA BA 'THOB PAR 'GYUR TE, MED PAR LTA BA  
DANG MTSAN NYID MED PAR LTA BA THOB NAS KYANG CHOS THAMS  
CAD LA MTSAN NYID THAMS CAD KYIS SKUR PA 'DEBS TE, CHOS  
RNAMS KYI KUN BRTAGS PA'I MTSAN NYID LA YANG SKUR PA 'DEBS  
CHOS RNAMS KYI GZHAN GYI DBANG GI MTSAN NYID DANG YONGS SU  
GRUB PA'I MTSAN NYID LA YANG SKUR PA 'DEBS SO, ,

If one were to start from this point, it would amount to espousing the view that nothing exists at all, and the view that nothing has any definitive characteristics at all. And once one reached the point of espousing the view that nothing exists, or that nothing has any definitive characteristics, then one would be discounting the existence of all things, from the point of view of each and every one of their attributes. This is true because one would then be discounting the existence of the attribute of having constructs for every existing thing; and one would also be discounting the existence of the attributes of having dependent things and having totality.

DE CI'I PHYIR ZHE NA, DON DAM YANG DAG 'PHAGS, 'DI LTAR GZHAN GYI DBANG GI MTSAN NYID DANG YONGS SU GRUB PA'I MTSAN NYID YOD NA NI KUN BRTAGS PA'I MTSAN NYID KYANG RAB TU SHES PAR 'GYUR NA, DE LA GANG DAG GZHAN GYI DBANG GI MTSAN NYID DANG YONGS SU GRUB PA'I MTSAN NYID LA MTSAN NYID MED PAR MTHONG BA DE DAG GIS NI KUN BRTAGS PA'I MTSAN NYID LA YANG SKUR PA BTAB PA YIN PA'I PHYIR TE, DE LTA BAS NA DE DAG NI MTSAN NYID RNAM PA GSUM CHAR LA YANG SKUR PA 'DEBS PA ZHES BYA'O, , ZHES SO, ,

And why would this be the case? Listen, Paramarta Samudgata. The point is that--if something displays the attribute of having a dependent thing, and the attribute of having totality--then we can understand it to display the attribute of having constructs. This being the case, anyone who holds the opinion that the attribute of having a dependent thing and the attribute of having totality have no definitive characteristics at all would also be discounting the existence of the attribute of having constructs. Such a person, we would then have to say, would be discounting the existence of all three of the attributes.

DON LA SGRA JI BZHIN DU ZHEN ZHES PA'I SGRA NI NGO BO NYID MED PAR STON PA'I MDO SDE LAS CHOS THAMS CAD DON DAM PAR RANG BZHIN GYIS STONG PA DANG NGO BO NYID DANG RANG GI MTSAN NYID KYIS STONG ZHES GSUNGS PA RNAMS YIN LA DE DAG LA JI LTAR BSTAN PA LTAR 'DZIN PA NI SGRA JI BZHIN PAR 'DOD PA'I LUGS SO, ,

What does the "what I said" refer to in the sentence about "believing that I meant exactly what I said"? It refers to statements in the sutras where Lord Buddha taught that nothing has any nature of its own: where he stated that all existing things are devoid of any nature which they have; void of any nature of their own; void of any nature of existing by definition. Any school that believed that these were to be taken just as they were spoken would be, in this context, a school that "believed that I meant exactly what I said."

GZHAN DBANG DANG YONGS GRUB KYI MTSAN NYID LA MTSAN NYID MED PAR MTHONG BA NI DE GNYIS RANG GI MTSAN NYID KYIS MA GRUB PAR LTA BA STE, DE CI'I PHYIR ZHE NA, ZHES PA MAN CHAD KYIS NGO BO NYID GSUM GA LA SKUR 'DEBS SU 'GRO BA'I RGYU MTSAN STON NO, ,

"The opinion that the attributes of having a dependent thing and having totality

have no definitive characteristics at all" refers to the opinion that neither of these two exists by definition. And everything from "Why would this be the case?" on down is meant to present the rationale for saying that one would be discounting the existence of all three of the natures.

RANG GI MTSAN NYID KYIS SKYE BA DANG 'GAG PA MED PAR GSUNGS  
PA LTAR BZUNG NA YANG GZHAN DBANG LA SKUR 'DEBS SU 'GYUR  
BA'I PHYIR GZHAN GNYIS LA YANG SKUR 'DEBS SU 'GRO BA SHES PAR  
BYA STE, SKYE 'GAG RANG GI MTSAN NYID KYIS MA GRUB NA SKYE  
'GAG MED PAR 'GYUR BA'I LUGS SO,,

You should further understand the point that--if one were to take on face value Lord Buddha's statements that neither the growth of things nor their stopping exists by definition--then one would be discounting the existence of dependent things. This being the case, one would effectively be discounting the existence of the other two attributes as well. And this is because--in this school at least--growing and stopping themselves could never exist at all if they did not exist by definition.

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[Folis 8a-9b in the ACIP digital edition (catalog number S5396), and pp. 18-22 in the ACIP Indian paper edition.]

GNYIS PA NI, NGO BO NYID MED PA'I TSUL DE LTAR YIN NA SKYE BA  
MED PA SOGS GANG LA DGONGS NAS GSUNGS SHE NA,

Here next is the second of the two sections on the answer. One may ask the following question: "If that's what Lord Buddha had in mind when he said that nothing had any nature of its own, then what was it he had in mind when he said 'nothing grows' and the like?"

'DI NI NGO BO NYID MED PA DANG PO DANG THA MA LA DGONGS NAS  
GSUNGS TE, DE YANG DANG PO NI DGONGS 'GREL LAS, DE LA MTSAN  
NYID NGO BO NYID MED PA NYID LA DGONGS NAS NGAS CHOS THAMS  
CAD MA SKYES PA MA 'GAGS PA GZOD MA NAS ZHI BA RANG BZHIN  
GYIS YONGS SU MYA NGAN LAS 'DAS PA'O ZHES BSTAN TO,,

What Lord Buddha had in mind when he mentioned those was the first and the last of the three kinds of a lack of any nature. The first is mentioned in the *Commentary on the True Intent* as follows:

I did say that nothing that exists ever grows, or stops; that they are all extinct, and have been so from the very beginning; and that they have, by their very nature, gone completely beyond the state of grief. What I had in mind when I said so was the quality of lacking any definitive nature.

DE CI'I PHYIR ZHE NA, DON DAM YANG DAG 'PHAGS, 'DI LTAR RANG GI  
MTSAN NYID KYIS MED PA GANG YIN PA DE NI MA SKYES PA YIN MA  
SKYES PA GANG YIN PA DE NI MA 'GAGS PA YIN NA, MA SKYES PA  
DANG MA 'GAGS PA GANG YIN PA DE DAG NI GZOD MA NAS ZHI BA  
YIN GZOD MA NAS ZHI BA GANG YIN PA DE NI RANG BZHIN GYIS  
YONGS SU MYA NGAN LAS 'DAS PA YIN, RANG BZHIN GYIS YONGS SU  
MYA NGAN LAS 'DAS PA GANG YIN PA DE LA NI YONGS SU MYA NGAN  
LAS BZLA BAR BYA BA CUNG ZAD KYANG MED DE, ZHES GSUNGS SO, ,

Why is that? This is how it works, Paramarta Samudgata. Those things which do not exist by definition are things that never grow. Those things that never grow are things that never stop. Those things that never grow nor stop are things which are extinct, and which have been so from the very beginning. Those things that are extinct, and which have been so from the very beginning, are things that have, by their very nature, gone completely beyond the state of grief. And those things which have, by their very nature, gone completely beyond the state of grief have nothing at all about them which is gone completely beyond the state of grief.

KUN BRTAGS LA SKYE 'GAG MED PA'I RGYU MTSAN DU RANG GI MTSAN  
NYID KYIS MA GRUB PA BKOD PA'I PHYIR SKYE 'GAG YOD NA RANG  
MTSAN GYIS GRUB PA DANG GZHAN DBANG LA RANG GI MTSAN NYID  
KYIS GRUB PA'I SKYE 'GAG YOD PAR YANG BSTAN NO, ,

The reason given here for saying that constructs never grow or stop is that they are things which do not exist by definition. The text is thereby also indicating that--if something did exhibit growing or stopping--then it would exist by definition; and that dependent things do exhibit growing and stopping which exist by definition.

SKYE 'GAG DANG BRAL BA NI 'DUS MA BYAS YIN PAS KUN NAS NYON  
MONGS KYI CHOS SU MI RUNG BA'I PHYIR GZOD MA NAS ZHI BA DANG  
RANG BZHIN GYIS MYA NGAN LAS 'DAS PAR BSTAN TE MYA NGAN NI  
'DIR KUN NYON YIN PA'I PHYIR RO,,

Objects of the kind that are bereft of any growing or stopping are unproduced things; and these are not the types of things that can belong to the mentally-afflicted side of things. This is why they are spoken of as "extinct, from the very beginning," and "gone, by their very nature, completely beyond grief"; for the meaning of "grief" here is the mentally-afflicted side of things.

GNYSIS PA YANG DGONGS 'GREL LAS, YANG DON DAM PA NGO BO NYID  
MED PA NYID CHOS BDAG MED PAS RAB TU PHYE BA LA DGONGS NAS  
NGAS CHOS THAMS CAD MA SKYES PA MA 'GAGS PA GZOD MA NAS ZHI  
BA RANG BZHIN GYIS YONGS SU MYA NGAN LAS 'DAS PA'O ZHES  
BSTAN NO,,

The second of the three lacks treated here is described in the *Commentary on the True Intent* as follows:

And from another point of view did I say that nothing that exists ever grows, or stops; that they are all extinct, and have been so from the very beginning; and that they have, by their very nature, gone completely beyond the state of grief. What I had in mind when I said so was the quality of lacking any nature of being ultimate: that which is delineated by the absence of a self-nature to objects.

DE CI'I PHYIR ZHE NA, 'DI LTAR DON DAM PA NGO BO NYID MED PA  
NYID CHOS BDAG MED PAS RAB TU PHYE BA NI RTAG PA RTAG PA'I DUS  
DANG THER ZUG THER ZUG GI DUS SU RNAM PAR GNAS PA KHO NA  
YIN LA, DE NI CHOS RNAMS KYI CHOS NYID 'DUS MA BYAS PA NYON  
MONGS PA THAMS CAD DANG BRAL BA YIN TE,

Why is that? This is how it works. The quality of lacking any nature of being ultimate—that which is delineated by the absence of a self-nature to objects—is something that only continues, in the time of changeless changelessness, and in the time of unshaking unshakability. This is that unproduced thing which is the real nature of all existing things, and it is free of everything mentally afflicted.

RTAG PA RTAG PA'I DUS DANG THER ZUG THER ZUG GI DUS SU CHOS  
NYID DE NYID KYI RNAM PAR GNAS PA 'DUS MA BYAS PA GANG YIN PA  
DE NI 'DUS MA BYAS PA'I PHYIR MA SKYES PA DANG MA 'GAGS PA YIN  
LA, DE NI NYON MONGS PA THAMS CAD DANG BRAL BA'I PHYIR GZOD  
MA NAS ZHI BA DANG RANG BZHIN GYIS YONGS SU MYA NGAN LAS  
'DAS PA YIN TE, ZHES GSUNGS SO, ,

Think about this thing, that real nature of things, an unproduced  
thing that continues in the time of changeless changelessness, and  
in the time of unshaking unshakability. Because it is an  
unproduced thing, it neither grows nor stops. And because it is  
free of any of the mentally afflicted things, then it is also extinct,  
from the very beginning, and something which is, by its very  
nature, gone completely beyond the state of grief. . .

RTAG PA RTAG PA'I DUS NI SNGA MA SNGA MA'I DUS DANG THER ZUG  
THER ZUG GI DUS NI PHYI MA PHYI MA'I DUS LA RGYA NAG GI 'GREL  
CHEN LAS BSHAD DO, ,

The *Great Commentary* explains the expression "time of changeless  
changelessness" as referring to all the time that has gone before, and the  
expression "time of unshaking unshakability" as meaning all the time that will  
come afterwards.

'O NA 'DIR NGO BO NYID MED PA'I GZHI GSUM GA LA MDZAD NAS SKYE  
BA SOGS MED PA'I GZHI NGO BO NYID MED PA BAR PA LA MI MDZAD  
PA DANG,

One might raise the following question:

When they talked about what it was that lacked any self nature,  
they referred to all three kinds of lacking a self-nature. But then  
when they talked about what it was that lacked any growing or the  
rest, they failed to refer to the middle kind of a lack of a self-nature.  
Why is that?

KUN LAS BTUS LAS KYANG KUN BRTAGS PA'I NGO BO NYID LA MTSAN  
NYID NGO BO NYID MED PA DANG GZHAN GYI DBANG LA SKYE BA  
NGO BO NYID MED PA DANG YONGS SU GRUB PA LA DON DAM PA NGO  
BO NYID MED PA'I PHYIR RO, , MA SKYES PA MA 'GAGS PA GZOD MA

NAS ZHI BA RANG BZHIN GYIS MYA NGAN LAS 'DAS PA ZHES 'BYUNG  
BA'I DGONGS PA GANG YIN ZHE NA, JI LTAR NGO BO NYID MED PA DE  
LTAR MA SKYES SO, , JI LTAR MA SKYES PA DE LTAR MA 'GAGS SO, , JI  
LTAR MA SKYES PA DANG MA 'GAGS PA DE LTAR GZOD MA NAS ZHI'O, ,  
DE LTAR RANG BZHIN GYIS YONGS SU MYA NGAN LAS 'DAS SO, , ZHES  
MTSAN NYID GSUM GA'I DBANG DU BYAS NAS MA SKYES PA SOGS SU  
BSHAD PA'I DON CI YIN ZHE NA,

And why too does the *Compendium* explain the lack of any growing,  
and the rest, with reference to all three of the attributes where it  
says,

. . . Because the lack of any definitive nature refers to  
the nature of constructs; and the lack of any nature of  
growing refers to dependent things; and the lack of  
any nature of being ultimate refers to totality. And  
what did Lord Buddha have in mind when he spoke  
of things that "never grow," "never stop," are "extinct  
from the very beginning," and "gone—by their very  
nature—beyond all grief"? Things that "never grow"  
do so exactly as those things that have no nature of  
their own lack their nature. Things that "never stop"  
do so exactly as those things that never grow never  
grow. Things that are "extinct from the very  
beginning" are that way just as those things that never  
grow and never stop are those ways. And that in turn  
is exactly how things are, by their very nature,  
beyond all grief.

'DI LA RGYA NAG GI 'GREL CHEN LAS, MDO LAS GZHAN DBANG SKYE  
BA MED PA SOGS KYI DGONGS GZHIR MA GSUNGS PA NI RTEN CING  
'BREL PAR 'BYUNG BA'I DON MED PA MIN PAR BSTAN PA'I PHYIR YIN LA,  
KUN LAS BTUS LAS BSHAD PA NI BDAG NYID KYIS SKYE BA DANG RGYU  
MED LAS SKYE BA MED PA'I DBANG DU BYAS PAR BSHAD DO, ,

The *Great Commentary* from China says on this point that the reason why  
dependent things are not mentioned in the sutra as being what Lord Buddha was  
referring to with the expressions "never grow" and so on is that the sutra means  
to indicate that these are not things of the kind which lack any nature of  
occurring through dependent origination.

GZHAN DBANG LA RANG GI MTSAN NYID KYIS SKYE BA DANG 'GAG PA  
YOD PAS SKYE 'GAG MED PAR GSUNGS PA GZHAN DBANG LA DGONGS  
PA MIN LA GZHAN DBANG PHAL CHER KUN NYON GYIS BSDUS PAS  
TSIG PHYI MA GNYIS KYI GZHIR MA MDZAD PA NI MDO 'DI'I DGONGS  
PA'O,,

The real point of the sutra though is as follows. Dependent things do exhibit growing and stopping, of a kind that exist by definition. Therefore these dependent things are not what Lord Buddha had in mind when he spoke of "never growing" or "never stopping." Moreover, the vast majority of dependent things are taken in by the mentally-afflicted side of things; and so this is why the dependent things are not described as something that Lord Buddha has in mind when he mentions the latter two expressions.

NGO BO NYID GSUM GYI RANG RANG GI SKABS KYI NGO BO MED RGYU  
DE'I DBANG DU BYAS NAS JI LTAR NGO BO NYID MED PA DE LTAR MA  
SKYES PA DANG MA 'GAGS LA GZOD MA NAS ZHI BA DANG, GDOD NAS  
MYA NGAN LAS 'DAS PA YANG YIN PA LA DGONGS NAS KUN LAS BTUS  
LAS DE LTAR BSHAD DO,,

And here is what the *Compendium* is referring to when it says that things never grow the same way they have no nature; and that this is too how they never stop, and how they are extinct from the very beginning, and how they are, by their very nature, completely beyond all grief: the point is that we are to refer, in each case, to that particular nature which each one of the three natures, respectively, is said to lack when we describe it.

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[Folis 9b-11a in the ACIP digital edition (catalog number S5396), and pp. 22-26 in the ACIP Indian paper edition.]

GSUM PA NI, KUN BRTAGS MTSAN NYID NGO BO NYID MED PA YIN NA  
KUN BRTAGS NYID GANG YIN SNYAM NA, DE NI DGONGS 'GREL LAS,  
RNAM PAR RTOG PA'I SPYOD YUL KUN BRTAGS PA'I MTSAN NYID KYI  
GNAS 'DU BYED KYI MTSAN MA LA GZUGS KYI PHUNG PO ZHES NGO BO  
NYID DAM BYE BRAG GI MTSAN NYID DU MING DANG BRDAR RNAM  
PAR BZHAG PA DANG , GZUGS KYI PHUNG PO SKYE'O ZHE'AM 'GAG PA  
ZHE'AM GZUGS KYI PHUNG PO SPANG BA DANG YONGS SU SHES PA



ZHES NGO BO NYID KYI MTSAN NYID DAM BYE BRAG GI MTSAN NYID  
DU MING DANG BRDAS RNAM PAR BZHAG PA GANG LAGS PA DE NI  
KUN BRTAGS PA'I MTSAN NYID LAGS TE, ZHES GSUNGS SO, ,

Here is the third division from above: an identification of the nature of the three real natures. "You have said," one may begin, "that the 'lack of a definitive nature' refers to constructs. But just what are these constructs themselves?" Our answer is drawn from the *Commentary on the True Intent*:

Consider that thing which is established through names and terms as either the attribute that relates to the very essence, or the attribute that relates to some particular, when we focus on something which is (1) the arena in which the constructing state of mind acts; (2) the object of the attribute of constructs; and (3) that which exhibits the typical features of a factor; and speak of it as "the heap of physical matter."

Consider as well that thing which is established through names and terms as either the attribute that relates to the very essence, or the attribute that relates to some particular, when we focus on the same thing and speak of "the growing of the heap of physical matter," or its "stopping," or "eliminating" or "grasping" this heap of physical matter.

This thing is what we refer to as "the attribute of constructs."

DE LA TSIG DANG PO GSUM GYIS NI KUN BRTAGS 'DOGS PA'I GZHI  
BSTAN LA DE MAN CHAD KYIS KUN TU BRTAGS TSUL STON TE, 'DI  
GZUGS PHUNG NGOO ZHES NGO BO DANG GZUGS PHUNG SKYE'O ZHES  
SOGS SU BTAGS PA NI BYE BRAG GAM KHYAD PAR DU BTAGS TSUL YIN  
TE ZHIB TU 'CHAD PAR 'GYUR RO, ,

Now the three numbered items are descriptions of the object towards which a construct is applied. The rest is a description of how the application of the construct is carried out: you either apply a construct about the general essence of an object by saying this is the "heap of physical matter," or you apply a construct about the particulars or features of the same object by saying, "the heap of physical matter is growing," or one of the others. We will be examining this point in further detail.

GZHAN DBANG SKYE BA NGO BO NYID MED PA YIN NA GZHAN DBANG  
GANG YIN SNYAM NA, DE NI DGONGS 'GREL LAS, RNAM PAR RTOG PA'I  
SPYOD YUL KUN BRTAGS PA'I MTSAN NYID KYI GNAS 'DU BYED KYI  
MTSAN MA GANG LAGS PA DE NI GZHAN GYI DBANG GI MTSAN NYID  
LAGS TE ZHES GSUNGS TE, DANG POS GANG GI YUL YIN PA DANG  
GNYIS PAS KUN BRTAGS KYI GDAGS GZHI DANG GSUM PAS RANG GI  
NGO BO BSTAN TO, ,

"And you have said," one may continue, "that the 'lack of a nature of growing'  
refers to dependent things. But just what are these dependent things?" Again  
we turn to the *Commentary on the True Intent*:

Consider that thing which is (1) the arena in which the constructing  
state of mind acts; (2) the object of the attribute of constructs; and  
(3) that which exhibits the typical features of a factor. This thing is  
what we refer to as "the attribute of dependent things."

The first term indicates what it is that takes dependent things as its object; the  
second indicates that dependent things are the basis towards which the  
constructs are applied; and the third indicates the very nature of dependent  
things.

YONGS GRUB DON DAM PA NGO BO NYID MED PA YIN NA DE NYID  
GANG YIN SNYAM NA, DE NI DGONGS 'GREL LAS, RNAM PAR RTOG PA'I  
SPYOD YUL KUN BRTAGS PA'I MTSAN NYID KYI GNAS 'DU BYED KYI  
MTSAN MA DE NYID, KUN BRTAGS PA'I MTSAN NYID DER YONGS SU MA  
GRUB CING NGO BO NYID DE KHO NAS NGO BO NYID MA MCHIS PA  
NYID CHOS LA BDAG MA MCHIS PA, DE BZHIN NYID RNAM PAR DAG  
PA'I DMIGS PA GANG LAGS PA DE NI YONGS SU GRUB PA'I MTSAN NYID  
LAGS TE ZHES GSUNGS SO, ,

"You have finally said," one may conclude, "that the 'lack of a nature of being  
ultimate' refers to totality. But just what is totality?" Again, the *Commentary on  
the True Intent* says:

Consider the fact that the thing which is (1) the arena in which the  
constructing state of mind acts; (2) the object of the attribute of  
constructs; and (3) that which exhibits the typical features of a  
factor itself is—in its totality—free of the attribute of constructs.  
Consider the fact that it is impossible for it to have any nature of

having that one specific nature. Consider the fact that it is impossible for it to display any self-nature of objects. And consider that essential nature which is the object perceived by [the path of] purity. This is what we refer to as "the attribute of totality."

CHOS LA ZHES SOGS KYIS CHOS KYI BDAG MED DE BZHIN NYID CES  
BRJOD PA GANG LA DMIGS NAS BSGOMS PAS SGRIB PA DAG PAR 'GYUR  
BA DE NYID YONGS GRUB TU NGOS BZUNG NGO , ,

The phrasing around the words "of objects" is saying, "that thing we talk about as the lack of any self-nature of objects, or the essential nature of things." Totality is being identified as that one thing which--if you focus on it and then meditate upon it--your spiritual obstacles are cleaned away.

CHOS KYI BDAG MED DE GANG ZHE NA NGO BO NYID MA MCHIS PA  
NYID DE NYID NI DE KHO NA ZHES PA'I DON NO , ,

And what is the lack of a self-nature to objects? It is, as the text says, the fact that it is impossible for these things to have any nature, a nature of having that one specific nature.

GANG GI NGO BO NYID MED PA YIN SNYAM PA LA, NGO BO NYID DE  
KHO NAS ZHES KUN BRTAGS KYI NGO BO NYID GONG DU SMOS PA LA  
GSUNGS NAS KHO NAS ZHES PAS NI GZHAN GCOD PAS NGO BO NYID  
GZHAN GNYIS KYI NGO BO NYID MA MCHIS PA LA MI BYED KYI KUN  
BRTAGS KHO NA'I NGO BO MED PA LA YONGS GRUB TU BYED CES PA'I  
DON NO , ,

One may ask just what kind of a nature it is that these things lack. The "nature of having that one specific nature" is referring to the nature that was just mentioned; that is, that of constructs. The words "that one" are meant to exclude the others, meaning the other two natures. Therefore the point here is not to say that it is impossible for these two to have any nature. The word "totality," the text is saying, refers to that one lack of a nature: the lack of a nature to constructs.

DE NYID GONG MAS BSHAD PA NI RNAM PAR RTOG PA ZHES PA NAS DE  
NYID CES PA'I BAR GYIS GZHAN DBANG STONG GZHIR BSTAN NAS KUN  
BRTAGS KYI MTSAN NYID DU MA GRUB CES PAS DE NYID KUN BRTAGS  
KYIS STONG PA LA YONGS GRUB TU SHIN TU GSAL BAS, MDO 'DIS  
STONG TSUL BSTAN PA NGES DON DU 'DOD PA DANG NGO BO NYID

THA MA NGO BO NYID DANG PO GNYIS KYIS STONG PA YONGS GRUB  
TU 'DOD PA YANG 'GAL BA'O,,

Here is what the words "the thing" that come first refer to. Everything from the words "consider the fact" down to "a factor itself" is meant to indicate that dependent things are the thing which has the emptiness. The words "free of the attribute of constructs" is a very clear statement that totality is something which refers to the fact that *these things* are empty or devoid of constructs. It is therefore a further contradiction to assert, on the one hand, that the manner in which this sutra teaches emptiness is literal, and then to assert at the same time that totality consists of the fact that the last of the three natures is empty or devoid of the first two.

STONG LUGS KYANG SA PHYOGS BUM PAS STONG PA LTAR DON  
GZHAN DU YOD PA BKAG PA MIN GYI GANG ZAG RDZAS SU MED PA  
LTAR GZHAN DBANG KUN BRTAGS KYI NGO BOR GRUB PAS STONG PA  
YIN NO,,

The emptiness or voidness here, moreover, is not the kind you have when a specific spot is empty or devoid of a water pitcher; not just the denial of some other thing. Dependent things, rather, are empty or devoid of any nature where they exist as the constructs--in the same way that a person does not exist as a substantial thing.

DE NYID KYI PHYIR MDO LAS, DE NYID KUN BRTAGS PA'I MTSAN NYID  
DER YONGS SU MA GRUB CING , ZHES GSUNGS SO,,

It is for this exact reason that the sutra says that "the thing" is, "in its totality, free of the attribute of constructs."

GANG GIS STONG PA'I KUN BRTAGS NI MDO 'DI'I KUN BRTAGS NGOS  
BZUNG BA'I SKABS GNYIS KAR NGO BO DANG KHYAD PAR DU BTAGS  
PA TZAM MIN PA'I KUN BRTAGS GZHAN MA GSUNGS PA'I RGYU MTSAN  
NI 'CHAD PAR 'GYUR RO,,

What are the kinds of constructs that these things are devoid or empty of? The sutra, in these two places where it undertakes to identify the nature of a construct, makes no mention of any other constructs beyond the sole two: those applied towards the very essence of an object and those applied towards its features. I will explain why the sutra fails to mention the others later on.

DE LTAR GZUGS PHUNG LA JI LTAR SBYAR BA BZHIN DU PHUNG PO  
LHAG MA BZHI DANG SKYE MCHED BCU GNYIS DANG RTEN 'BREL BCU  
GNYIS DANG ZAS BZHI DANG KHAMS DRUG DANG BCO BRGYAD PO RE  
RE LA YANG MTSAN NYID GSUM GSUM SBYAR BAR GSUNGS SO,,

We have thus shown how the three attributes can be applied to the heap of physical matter; similar sets of three can be applied as well to the four remaining heaps; to the twelve doors of sense; to the twelve links of dependent origination; to the four types of sustenance; to the six elements; and to the eighteen categories.

SDUG BDEN LA NI GDAGS GZHI SNGAR BZHIN LA SDUG BSNAL GYI  
BDEN PA'O ZHES NGO BO DANG SDUG BDEN YONGS SU SHES PA ZHES  
BYE BRAG TU MING DANG BRDAS BZHAG PA KUN BRTAGS DANG ,  
GZHAN DBANG SNGAR BZHIN DANG YONGS GRUB KYANG SNGAR  
DANG 'DRA LA NGO BO NYID DE KHO NAS NGO BO NYID MA MCHIS PA  
ZHES GSUNGS SHING , DE BZHIN DU BDEN PA LHAG MA LA YANG  
SBYAR RO,,

Let's take for example the truth of suffering. The constructs here are those things that are established through names and terms when you focus on the object of your construct and think to yourself either of its very essence—with the words "truth of suffering"—or of its particulars, in wording such as "The truth of suffering is something that a person should realize is happening to them." The dependent thing here is just the same as we described it above, and so is the totality; you can even use the same expression and say it is "impossible for it to have any nature of having that one specific nature." Use this same pattern for the other truths.

BYANG PHYOGS SDE TSAN BDUN LA YANG SBYAR TE GDAGS GZHI  
SNGAR BZHIN LA YANG DAG PA'I TING NGE 'DZIN ZHES NGO BO DANG  
DE'I MI MTHUN PHYOGS DANG GNYEN PO SOGS SNGAR BSHAD PA  
RNAMS LA DE DANG DE'TO ZHES KHYAD PAR DU BTAGS PA'I KUN  
BRTAGS DANG , NGO BO NYID GZHAN GNYIS SDUG BDEN BZHIN  
GSUNGS SO,,

The pattern applies as well to all seven groups within the elements of enlightenment. Again you are, as before, choosing a basis to receive the label, and then applying constructs either to its essence (in the words, for example, that

"this is a pure state of concentration") or to its features (by speaking about the this or that that it has; speaking, as we mentioned before, about the things that work against it, or the spiritual antidote involved, or anything of the like). Then you go into the other two natures, just as we did with the truth of suffering.

DE DAG NI SNGAR 'GAL SPONG DRIS PA'I SKABS SU BSHAD PA'I GZUGS  
PHUNG NAS LAM GYI YAN LAG GI BAR GYI RE RE LA YANG MTSAN  
NYID GSUM GSUM GYI 'JOG LUGS BYAS NAS DE LA DGONGS NAS STON  
PAS NGO BO NYID MED PA GSUM DU BSHAD PAR BDAG GIS GO'O ZHES  
DON DAM YANG DAG 'PHAGS KYIS STON PA LA GSOL BA'O, ,

All this then shows how it is that we can establish three attributes each for every one of the items mentioned in the original question meant to clarify those apparent inconsistencies: for everything from the heap of physical matter up to the various elements of the path. And Paramarta Samudgata respectfully says to the Teacher, "Now I understand why you taught the different kinds of a lack of self-nature as being three, for you were thinking of how we establish the three attributes this way."

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[Folios 11a-13a in the ACIP digital edition (catalog number S5396), and pp. 26-31 in the ACIP Indian paper edition.]

BZHI PA LA GNYIS, MDO DGOD PA DANG , DE'I DON CUNG ZAD BSHAD  
PA'O, , DANG PO NI,

Here now is the fourth division from above: a statement, offered by the bodhisattva, of the conclusion reached through the preceding points. We proceed in two steps: a presentation of the relevant passage of the sutra, and then a brief explanation of its meaning. Here is the first.

DE LTAR NA GSUNG RAB LA CHOS RNAMS RANG GI MTSAN NYID KYIS  
YOD PA DANG CHOS RNAMS RANG GI MTSAN NYID KYIS MA GRUB PAR  
STON PA DANG , RANG GI MTSAN NYID KYIS GRUB MA GRUB LEGS PAR  
PHYE BA'I MDO SDE GSUM BYUNG ZHING DE DAG KYANG NGO BO  
NYID YOD MED LEGS PAR PHYE MA PHYE GNYIS SU 'GYUR LA PHYE BA  
NI DON GZHAN DU DRANG BAR MI BYA BAS NGES PA'I DON DANG , MA  
PHYE BA NI DON GZHAN DU DRANG DGOS PAS DRANG BA'I DON YIN  
LA,

DE LA YANG GNYIS YOD PAS MDO SDE GNYIS DRANG DON DANG GCIG  
NGES DON DU SNGAR BSHAD PA RNAMS KYI SHUGS KYIS SHES PAR  
'GYUR RO, ,

We see then that Lord Buddha has taught, in his highest of all spoken words, three different groups of sutra: one in which said that every existing thing does exist by definition; one in which he said that no existing thing exists by definition; and a third in which he made fine distinctions between things, saying that some exist by definition, and some do not.

We see further that these various sutras can be grouped into two categories: those that do and those that do not make fine distinctions between the different ways in which things have no nature of their own at all. Those that do make these distinctions do not need to be interpreted further, and are therefore considered literal. Those that do not make these distinctions must be interpreted further, and so are considered figurative. There are two groups of the latter, and so we can say that two of the groups of sutra are figurative, and one is literal. All this we can understand by implication, from the discussions that have appeared earlier.

SHUGS LA GNAS PA'I DON DE NYID DUS KYI RIM PA'I SGO NAS 'KHOR  
LO GSUM DANG SBYAR BA'I DRANG NGES SU 'GYUR TSUL DON DAM  
YANG DAG 'PHAGS KYIS STON PA LA ZHUS PA NI DGONGS 'GREL LAS,  
BCOM LDAN 'DAS KYIS DANG POR YUL BA RA n'A SIR DRANG SRONG  
SMRA BA RI DVAGS KYI NAGS SU NYAN THOS KYI THEG PA LA YANG  
DAG PAR ZHUGS PA RNAMS LA 'PHAGS PA'I BDEN PA BZHI'I RNAM PA  
BSTAN PAS CHOS KYI 'KHOR LO NGO MTSAR RMAD DU BYUNG BA  
SNGON LHAR GYUR PA'AM MIR GYUR PA SUS KYANG MTHUN PAR 'JIG  
RTEN DU MA BSKOR BA GCIG RAB TU BSKOR TE, BCOM LDAN 'DAS KYIS  
CHOS KYI 'KHOR LO RAB TU BSKOR BA DE YANG BLA NA MCHIS PA  
SKABS MCHIS PA DRANG BA'I DON RTZOD PA'I GZHI'I GNAS SU GYUR  
PA LAGS,

This way in which speak of the three historical turnings of the wheel as being either figurative or literal, this point that we arrive at through implication from what has come before, is expressed to the Teacher by the bodhisattva Paramarta Samudgata in the following words from the *Commentary on the True Intent*:

O Conqueror, you taught first in the land of Varanasi, in the forest full of wild animals, the wood of the saints; you imparted a teaching on the subject of the four realized truths to those who had entered, perfectly, the way of the listeners. And in doing so you turned, perfectly, a wheel of the Dharma which was amazing, and awe-inspiring; one which no being—neither god nor man—had ever turned accurately in this world ever before.

And Conqueror, this perfect turning of the wheel of the Dharma was one which had something higher; it was one which left an opening; it was one which had to be interpreted further; and it was one which could serve as a basis for contention.

BCOM LDAN 'DAS KYIS CHOS RNAMS KYI NGO BO NYID MA MCHIS PA NYID LAS BRTZAMS, SKYE BA MA MCHIS PA DANG 'GAG PA MA MCHIS PA DANG GZOD MA NAS ZHI BA DANG RANG BZHIN GYIS YONGS SU MYA NGAN LAS 'DAS PA NYID LAS BRTZAMS NAS THEG PA CHEN PO LA YANG DAG PAR ZHUGS PA RNAMS LA STONG PA NYID SMOS PA'I RNAM PAS CHES NGO MTSAR RMAD DU BYUNG BA'I CHOS KYI 'KHOR LO GNYIS PA BSKOR TE, BCOM LDAN 'DAS KYIS CHOS KYI 'KHOR LO BSKOR BA DE YANG BLA NA MCHIS PA SKABS MCHIS PA DRANG BA'I DON RTZOD PA'I GZHI'I GNAS SU GYUR PA LAGS KYI,

And then, O Conqueror, you turned the wheel of the Dharma a second time, for the benefit of those who had entered, perfectly, the greater way. This time you took an appearance of speaking of emptiness, doing so by bringing up first the fact that no existing thing could ever have any nature of its own—and then going on to the facts that nothing could ever grow; and that nothing could ever stop; and that everything was extinct from the very beginning, and that everything was, by its very nature, completely beyond all grief.

This turning of the wheel of the Dharma was one which was ever so amazing, and ever so awe-inspiring. And Conqueror, this turning of the wheel of the Dharma as well was one which had something higher; it was one which left an opening; it was one which had to be interpreted further; and it was one which could serve as a basis for contention.

BCOM LDAN 'DAS KYIS CHOS RNAMS KYI NGO BO NYID MA MCHIS PA



NYID LAS BRTZAMS, SKYE BA MA MCHIS PA DANG 'GAG PA MA MCHIS  
PA DANG GZOD MA NAS ZHI BA DANG RANG BZHIN GYIS YONGS SU  
MYA NGAN LAS 'DAS PA NYID LAS BRTZAMS NAS THEG PA THAMS CAD  
LA YANG DAG PAR ZHUGS PA RNAMS LA LEGS PAR RNAM PAR PHYE  
BA DANG LDAN PA NGO MTSAR RMAD DU BYUNG BA'I CHOS KYI 'KHOR  
LO GSUM PA BSKOR TE,

And then, O Conqueror, you turned the wheel of the Dharma a third time, imparting a teaching to those who had entered, perfectly, every one of the different ways: you spoke to them of how to make the fine distinctions. And you did this by bringing up first the fact that no existing thing could ever have any nature of its own—and then going on to the facts that nothing could ever grow; and that nothing could ever stop; and that everything was extinct from the very beginning, and that everything was, by its very nature, completely beyond all grief. This too was a turning of the wheel which was amazing, and awe-inspiring.

BCOM LDAN 'DAS KYIS CHOS KYI 'KHOR LO BSKOR BA 'DI NI BLA NA MA  
MCHIS PA SKABS MA MCHIS PA NGES PA'I DON LAGS TE RTZOD PA'I  
GZHI'I GNAS SU GYUR PA MA LAGS SO, , ZHES GSUNGS SO, ,

But Conqueror, this turning of the wheel of the Dharma was one which had nothing higher; it was one which left no opening; it was one which could be taken literally; and it was one which could never serve as a basis for contention.

GNYIS PA LA GNYIS, MDO'I TSIG DON CUNG ZAD BSHAD PA DANG ,  
DRANG NGES KYI TSUL CUNG ZAD BSHAD PA'O, ,

Here secondly is our brief explanation of the meaning of the sutra. Here too there are two parts: a brief explanation of the meaning of the wording of the sutra, and a brief explanation of the distinction between teaching which is figurative and teaching which is literal.

DANG PO NI, DE LA 'KHOR LO DANG PO BSKOR BA LA GNAS NI TSIG  
DANG POS BSTAN LA GDUL BYA NI GNYIS PAS SO, , 'PHAGS PA'I ZHES PA  
NAS BSKOR TE ZHES PA'I BAR GYIS 'KHOR LO'I NGO BO BSTAN NO, ,  
BDEN PA BZHI'I RNAM PA BSTAN ZHES PA NI BRJOD BYA GANG LAS  
BRTZAMS NAS BSTAN PA'O, , NGO MTSAR SOGS NI DE'I BSNGAGS PA'O, ,

DE YANG ZHES SOGS NI NGES DON MIN PAR STON PA'O, , DE LA BLA NA  
MCHIS PA NI 'DI'I GONG NA KHYAD PAR CAN GYI BSTAN PA YOD PA'O, ,  
SKABS MCHIS PA NI 'DI LAS SKABS KHYAD PAR CAN GYI BSTAN PA YOD  
PA'O, , STONG PA NYID MI STON ZHING YOD PAR STON PAS DRANG BA'I  
DON NO, , RTZOD PA DANG BCAS PA NI GZHAN GYIS GZHIG PAR BYA  
BA DANG NYAN THOS SDE PA RNAMS KYI RTZOD PA SMRA BA'I GNAS  
SU GYUR PA'O, , ZHES WEN TSEG GIS BSHAD DO,

Here is the first. Wentsek explains the wording of this citation from the sutra as follows. The first part of the quotation about the first turning of the wheel of the Dharma is meant to indicate where this wheel was turned; then the second part is meant to indicate the types of disciples for whom it was turned. The part about "imparting a teaching" in a wheel "never turned before" on the subject of the "four realized truths" is meant to convey the very nature of this turning of the wheel.

The part about "imparting a teaching on the subject of the four realized truths" is intended to convey the subject matter which Lord Buddha brought up in this turning of the wheel. The phrase with "amazing" and so on is intended as a praise of this turning. The wording "this turning as well" is meant to indicate that this second turning was not something we could take literally.

"Having something higher" means that this particular turning of the wheel does have another one which is above it, in the sense of being more extraordinary. The word "opening" is to be taken as "occasion," meaning that there does exist a teaching which was imparted on an even more extraordinary occasion. We say a teaching is "something that we have to interpret further" when it either fails to teach emptiness or does have this teaching. Teachings involve "contention" in the sense that they are something that others may question, and because they provide a basis of contention for those of the Listener way.

,MDO'I DON NI DANG PO NI BLA NA STE 'DI'I GONG NA NGES DON  
GZHAN YOD PA'O, ,

The point of the first sutra reference at this juncture is to say that certain teachings have something "higher than them" in the sense that there are other teachings that are "above" them, since they can be taken literally.

GNYSIS PA NI, 'DI'I DON JI LTAR BSTAN PA LTAR KHAS BLANGS PA LA  
RGOL BA GZHAN GYI SKYON GYI SKABS MCHIS PA'O, , 'DI LA RGYA NAG

GI 'GREL PA LAS RGOL BA DANG BCAS PA ZHES KYANG BSGYUR BAS  
DON DE LTAR RO, ,

The point of the second reference is that people who accept certain teachings as saying what they mean thereby leave an "opening" for philosophical opponents to attack them. This is in fact what the reference actually means, given the fact that we also see the wording from the Chinese commentary translated as "involving attacks from opponents."

GSUM PA NI 'DI'I DON GZHAN DU DRANG DGOS PA'O, ,

The point of the third reference is that one cannot accept certain teachings on face value, and must interpret them further.

BZHI PA NI DON 'DI LTAR YIN STON PAS GSAL POR MA PHYE BAS DON  
LA MI MTHUN PAR RTZOD PA'O, ,

The point of the fourth reference is that--if the Teacher has failed to make certain distinctions about a particular teaching clearly, if he has failed to say "This is what it really means"--then it is possible that contention may arise, with some people saying that it meant something different.

'KHOR LO GNYIS PA LA CHOS RNAMS KYI ZHES PA NAS BRTZAMS NAS  
ZHES PA'I BAR NI BRJOD BYA GANG LAS BRTZAMS PA'O, , THEG PA ZHES  
SOGS NI GANG LA BSKOR BA'I GDUL BYA'O, ,

Consider the part of the sutra reference to the second turning of the Wheel, from the place where it mentions "bringing up first," all the way down to "completely beyond all grief." This is meant to describe what subject matter is brought up for the teaching to proceed. The part about those of a certain "way" and so on constitutes a description of the kinds of disciples for whom the particular wheel was turned.

STONG PA NYID SMOS PA'I RNAM PAS ZHES PA'I DON CHOS KYI BDAG  
MED BSTAN PA LA 'GREL PA KHA CIG GIS BSHAD LA, RGYA NAG GI  
'GREL CHEN LAS, MI MNGON PA'I RNAM PAS ZHES KYANG 'BYUNG LA  
DE'I DON YOD PA MKHYUD PA LA BSHAD DO, ,

The part about "an appearance of teaching emptiness" has been explained in some commentaries as referring to the lack of a self-nature to objects. We also see

though in the great Chinese commentary the expression "in a way that was not evident," and this is explained as meaning "it does have this teaching, but in a concealed way."

'GYUR NI DE LEGS LA DON NI 'KHOR LO PHYI MA GNYIS BRJOD BYA  
NGO BO NYID MED PA LAS BRTZAMS NAS STON PAR 'DRA BA LA STON  
TSUL GYI KHYAD PAR NI BAR PAS NGO BO NYID YOD MED SNGAR LTAR  
MA PHYE BAS MI MNGON PA'I RNAM PAS ZHES GSUNGS LA THA MAS  
PHYE BAS LEGS PAR RNAM PAR PHYE BA ZHES GSUNGS SO, ,

As far as a translation of the original, this one is better; the point of it is that the latter two turnings of the wheel are similar in that Lord Buddha gives his teaching by bringing up the fact that nothing has any nature of its own. There is however a difference between the two in how they make their presentation: the middle turning teaches its subject matter in a way which is not "evident," meaning without making the distinction between things having a nature of their own or not as explained above; whereas the final turning is referred to the "one of fine distinctions" precisely because it does make this distinction.

SDE SNOD GSUM PA WEN TSEG GIS GSUM PA LA LTOS NAS BLA NA YOD  
PA SOGS LAS MA BSHAD CING , RGYA GAR GYI MKHAN PO YANG DAG  
BDEN PA'I BSHAD PA BKOD MOD KYANG LEGS PAR MI SNANG BAS MA  
BRIS LA RANG GI LUGS NI SNGA MA LTAR RO, ,

That master of the three collections of teachings, Wentsek, says nothing more about the idea of "having something higher" than to describe it as "something higher relative to the third" turning of the wheel, and such. The Indian preceptor Yangdak Denpa has admittedly offered an explanation of this point in his work, but since it does not appear to be a good one I will not repeat it here; our own position is that already expressed.

'KHOR LO GSUM PA LA BRJOD BYA GANG LAS BRTZAMS PA BAR PA  
DANG 'DRA ZHING , GDUL BYA NI THEG PA THAMS CAD LA YANG DAG  
PAR ZHUGS PA STE SNGA MA GNYIS NI THEG PA CHE CHUNG SO SO BA  
YIN LA 'DI NI GNYI GA'I DBANG DU BYAS PA'O, ,

The subject matter that Lord Buddha brings up in the third turning of the wheel is similar to that of the middle turning. The disciples for the third turning are "those who have entered, perfectly, every one of the different ways"; the point being that, whereas the disciples for the previous two turnings of the wheel

belong one to the greater way and one to the lesser, this third turning was meant to relate to both.

LEGS PAR PHYE BA NI SNGAR BSHAD PA LTAR GZUGS LA SOGS PA'I  
CHOS RE RE LA MTSAN NYID GSUM GSUM GYI RNAM GZHAG DANG DE  
LA NGO BO NYID MED TSUL GSUM GSUM DU PHYE BA'O, ,

The phrase "fine distinctions" here refers to the fact that all three of the various attributes can be established, as mentioned above, for each of the various objects of existence—for physical matter or any of the rest; it also refers to the fact that the lack of a nature to objects is distinguished into three different types relating to these three.

CHOS KYI 'KHOR LO BSKOR BA 'DI NI ZHES NYE BA'I TSIG GIS SMOS PA  
NI DE MA THAG TU SMOS PA'I LEGS PAR RNAM PAR PHYE BA'I 'KHOR LO  
DGONGS 'GREL DANG DE BZHIN DU PHYE BA RNAMS LA ZER BA YIN  
GYI, DUS THA MAR GSUNGS KYANG NGO BO NYID YOD MED KYI TSUL  
'DI BZHIN DU MA PHYE BA'I MDO SDE RNAMS LA ZER BA MIN NO, ,

The expression "this turning of the wheel of the Dharma" includes that pronoun of relative proximity: "this." It applies to the turning of the wheel of the Dharma in which the fine distinctions were made—that turning of the wheel which is spoken of immediately afterwards. And this refers to the *Commentary on the True Intent*, as well as to other teachings that make similar distinctions. We do not however refer to those sutras which do not make this kind of distinction—between something's having a nature of its own or not—as being this particular turning of the wheel, even if they were spoken by Lord Buddha during the final period of his teaching.

'KHOR LO DE'I CHE BA NI BLA NA MA MCHIS PA SOGS KYIS STON TE, 'DI  
MCHOG TU RMAD DU BYUNG ZHING DE LAS LHAG PA GZHAN MED PAS  
BLA NA MA MCHIS PA DANG , PHYIS MCHOG TU 'GYUR PA'I SKABS  
DANG GZHIG PA'I SKABS MED PAS SKABS MA MCHIS PA DANG , YOD  
MED RDZOGS PAR BSTAN PAS NGES PA'I DON DANG , RTZOD PA SMRA  
BA'I GZHI'I GNAS MIN PA'O, , ZHES WEN TSEG GIS BSHAD PA NI SKABS  
MED PA'I SNGA MA MA GTOGS PA SNGAR BDAG GIS BLA NA YOD PA  
SOGS KYI DON BSHAD PA LAS BZLOG PA DANG DON 'DRA'O, ,

The greatness of this last turning of the wheel is indicated in the various expressions such as "one which has nothing higher." Because this particular

turning of the wheel is supremely awe-inspiring, and because there is no teaching which is any greater, it "has nothing higher." Because there will be no later occasion upon which some more supreme teaching is imparted, and also because with this turning of the wheel there is no opening for others to raise any questions, it "leaves no opening." Because it definitively relates what does exist and what does not, it is a turning of the wheel "which can be taken literally," and which is not a teaching that could serve as a "basis" for someone to raise any "contention." This is how Wentsek gives his commentary; except for the former of the two explanations of the expression "leaves no opening" or "occasion," the basic meaning of the rest corresponds to the opposite of the meanings I have already listed for the various expressions beginning with "does have something higher."

MDO SDE SNGA MA GNYIS KYI SGRA JI BZHIN PA'I DON LA SKYON GYI SKABS YOD LA 'DI LA MED PA NI SGRA JI BZHIN PA'I DON DE LAS GZHAN DU DRANG DGOS MI DGOS KYI RGYU MTSAN GYIS YIN LA, RTZOD PA YOD MED NI MDO SDE'I DON NGO BO NYID YOD MED STON PAS DE LTAR GTAN LA PHAB PA YIN MIN LA MKHAS PAS BRTAGS NA RTZOD SA MED PA LA BYA'I RTZOD PA GZHAN MED PAR STON PA MIN NO, ,

There is an opening or opportunity for criticizing the meaning of the first two groups of sutra, if you take it on face value. The reason that there is no such opening or opportunity in this group is that one may take the words on face value; they need not be interpreted further. Whether or not there is contention relates to whether or not the point taught by the particular group of sutras is that things do or do not have a nature of their own. Therefore a lack of "contention" here refers to whether, when a real thinker examines a teaching that does or does not make the presentation this way, he will find any point of contention. "Contention" here though is not meant to refer to just anything that anyone might find to argue about with regard to the teaching.

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[Folios 13a-14a in the ACIP digital edition (catalog number S5396), and pp. 31-34 in the ACIP Indian paper edition.]

GNYIS PA NI, DE 'DRA BA'I 'KHOR LO DANG PO LA BDEN BZHI'I CHOS 'KHOR DANG GNYIS PA LA MTSAN NYID MED PA DANG , GSUM PA LA DON DAM RNAM PAR NGES BA'I 'KHOR LO ZHES RGYA NAG GI 'GREL

CHEN LAS BTAGS LA, MDO 'DI NYID KYI TSIG DANG BSTUN NA GSUM PA  
LA LEGS PAR RNAM PAR PHYE BA'I 'KHOR LO ZHES BYA'O, ,

Here is the second part from above: a brief explanation of the distinction between teaching which is figurative and teaching which is literal. The Chinese commentary refers to these different turnings of the wheel as follows. The first is the "Turning of the Wheel on the Four Truths," and the second is the "Turning of the Wheel on How Nothing Exists by Definition." The third is called the "Turning of the Wheel on Ascertaining the Ultimate." If we follow the actual wording of the sutra itself though we would refer to the third one as the "Turning of the Wheel on Fine Distinctions."

DE LA MDO 'DIS DRANG NGES SU 'JOG PA'I TSUL NI LEGS PAR PHYE MA  
PHYE GNYIS YIN LA, DRANG NGES SU 'JOG PA'I GZHI NI CHOS RNAMS  
LA RANG GI MTSAN NYID KYIS GRUB PA'I NGO BO NYID YOD MNYAM  
DU GSUNGS PA DANG MED MNYAM DU GSUNGS PA DANG YOD MED  
LEGS PAR PHYE BA GSUM YIN PA NI, MDO SDE LA 'GAL SPONG GI DRI BA  
DANG DE'I LAN BTAB PA DANG , CHOS RE RE LA NGO BO NYID GSUM  
GSUM GYI RNAM GZHAG BYAS NAS DE LA DGONGS NAS NGO BO NYID  
MED PAR BSHAD TSUL ZHUS PA DANG , DE DAG LA BR TEN NAS DUS  
SNGA PHYIR GSUNGS PA'I 'KHOR LO GSUM GYI DRANG NGES ZHUS PA  
LAS SHIN TU GSAL BA YIN NO, ,

Now the way in which this particular sutra decides whether a teaching is figurative or literal hinges on the two of whether it makes certain fine distinctions or not. What it is that we are trying to decide is figurative or literal consists of all three of the teachings: the one in which it was stated equally for all existing objects that they have some nature of their own, one which exists by definition; the one in which it was stated equally for all existing objects that they have no such nature; and the one in which fine distinctions were made between them, stating that some did and some did not have such a nature.

The fact that these three are what we are trying to decide is figurative or not is extremely clear from the following:

- 1) from the fact that the question in which the bodhisattva is trying to rule out any apparent inconsistencies, and the answer that is given, relate to the various groups of sutra;

2) from the way in which three lacks of a self nature are set forth for every existing thing, and the statement about nothing having any nature of its own explained in terms of this treatment; and

3) from the way in which the three turnings of the wheel, delivered as they were during specific periods, are thereby understood as being either figurative or literal.

DE'I PHYIR DUS DANG POR BDEN PA BZHI LA BRTZAMS NAS RANG GI  
MTSAN NYID YOD PA SOGS SU GSUNGS PA'I 'KHOR LO DANG PO DRANG  
DON DU STON PA YIN GYI DUS DANG POR GSUNGS TSAD KYI GSUNG  
RAB THAMS CAD LA MIN TE, DPER NA DUS DANG POR WA RA n'A SIR  
LNGA SDE LA SHAM THABS ZLUM POR BGO BAR BYA'O, , ZHES PA LA  
SOGS PA'I BSLAB BYA GSUNGS PA LA 'DIR DOGS PA GCOD MI DGOS PA  
BZHIN NO, ,

Therefore what is being indicated as figurative with regard to the first wheel is that teaching which relates to the initial period, and which starts off from the four realized truths to make statements such as that all existing things exist by definition; it is not though the case that we are referring to everything that Lord Buddha ever spoke during this initial period. Remember that he did, for example, make statements during this initial period such as his advice to the Group of Five at Varanasi urging them to "be sure to wear your lower robes in a neat circle." This is not the kind of teaching that we are concerned with here, the kind that we have to analyze to find out what it means.

DE BZHIN DU GNYIS PA YANG NGO BO NYID MED PA SOGS SU GSUNGS  
PA LA BYA'I, DUS GNYIS PAR GSUNGS KYANG NGO BO NYID MED PA  
SOGS LAS MA BRTZAMS PA'I MDO SDE LA 'GAL SPONG DRIS PA LTAR  
GYI DOGS PA MED PAS DE 'DIR DRANG DON DU STON MI DGOS SO, ,

Just so, the second turning of the wheel is defined here according to whether Lord Buddha made statements such as the one about nothing having any nature of its own. There are other groups of sutras that do also relate to the second period of Lord Buddha's teaching, but which are not taught from the point of view of things not having any nature of their own, or the like. But since these are not the kinds of teachings about which one might have questions of the kind that arise in the section of the sutra where the bodhisattva tries to clarify some apparent inconsistencies, they need not be clarified here as teachings which are figurative.



'KHOR LO GSUM PA NGES DON DU BSHAD PA YANG SNGAR BSHAD PA  
LTAR LEGS PAR PHYE BA RNAMS YIN GYI THAMS CAD MIN PA NI MDO  
NYID LAS KYANG SHIN TU GSAL LA, DPER NA MYA NGAN LAS 'DA'  
KHAR 'DUL BA MDOR BSDUS ZHES BYA BA RUNG MTHUN DU GRAGS PA  
GSUNGS KYANG DE MDO 'DIS NGES DON DU STON PA MIN PA BZHIN  
NO, ,

The third turning of the wheel that is explained as being literal too is the one mentioned before: the teachings in which those fine distinctions are made, and not just everything that was spoken. This fact is made exceedingly clear in the sutra itself. Lord Buddha, for example, did as he was just about to enter his final nirvana give a teaching on what he declared would be appropriate monastic behavior entitled the *Summary of Vowed Morality*. This is not though a teaching which this sutra is explaining as being a literal teaching.

MDO 'DIS CI ZHIG 'GRUB PAR 'DOD NAS CHOS 'KHOR GYI DRANG NGES  
PHYE BA YIN SNYAM NA, CHOS RNAMS LA SO SOR MA PHYE BAR RANG  
GI MTSAN NYID KYIS GRUB PA DANG MA GRUB PAR BSTAN PA SGRA JI  
BZHIN DU 'DZIN PA BZLOG NAS KUN BRTAGS RANG GI MTSAN NYID  
KYIS MA GRUB CING , NGO BO NYID GZHAN GNYIS RANG GI MTSAN  
NYID KYIS GRUB PA DANG GZHAN DBANG LA KUN BRTAGS KYIS  
STONG PA'I STONG NYID LAM GYI DMIGS PA'I DON DAM MTHAR THUG  
TU DE'I GDUL BYA LA BSTAN PAR BZHED NAS YIN NO, , DE'I PHYIR  
'KHOR LO DANG PO GNYIS DRANG DON DANG THA MA NGES DON DU  
GSUNGS SO, ,

One may ask the following question:

What is it that this particular sutra hopes to accomplish by distinguishing the various turnings of the wheel into those that are figurative and those that are literal?

The sutra first seeks to prevent us from taking on face value those teachings which state either that all existing objects exist by definition, or that none exist by definition, without making any attempt to distinguish them into parts. It seeks to inform us that constructs do not exist by definition, but that the other two natures do exist by definition. It finally seeks to teach us that that form of emptiness represented by the absence of those constructs in dependent things is

the ultimate object perceived by the path. This then is why the sutra states that the first two turnings of the wheel are figurative, and the final turning literal.

DE'I PHYIR KHA CIG GIS MDO 'DI LA BR TEN NAS DUS GSUM PAR GSUNGS PA'I MDO THAMS CAD NGES DON DU BSGRUBS NAS GZHAN SDE'I RIGS CAN BDAG TU SMRA BA LA ZHEN PA RNAMS DRANG BA'I PHYIR DU GSUNGS PA 'GA' ZHIG SGRA JI BZHIN PAR 'DOD CING , CHOS NYID MA GTOGS PA'I CHOS CAN THAMS CAD 'KHRUL PA'I BLOS RLOM PA MA GTOGS PA RANG GI NGO BO GRUB PA CUNG ZAD KYANG MED CING CHOS NYID BDEN PAR GRUB PA'I BDEN MI BDEN RNAM PAR PHYE BA NI SNGAR BSHAD PA'I LEGS PAR RNAM PAR PHYE BA'I DON DU 'DOD DO, ,

Given all this, some have used the wording of this sutra to go on and claim that it proves that everything which Lord Buddha taught during all the periods is meant to be taken literally. These people would then have to say that certain statements which the Buddha made to attract those of other religions who still believed that things could have some self-nature are teachings that we are meant to take on face value. They also say that no object but the real nature of things is anything more than the simple delusion of a mistaken state of mind; these other things have not the slightest bit of an existing nature to them. They say finally that the meaning of "fine distinctions" is the distinction between what exists in truth or not, in the sense of being this one true thing: the real nature of things.

DE LA GZHAN DAG GIS NI MDO 'DIS DRANG NGES PHYE BA LTAR YIN NA PHYOGS SNGA MAS SMRA BA LTAR 'GYUR RO SNYAM NAS DRANG NGES KYI TSUL DE SGRA JI BZHIN PA MIN NO ZHES 'GOG

Others have had the concern that--if they were to make the distinction between the figurative and the literal in the way in which this particular sutra does so--then they would be forced to make the same claims as the group just mentioned. Therefore they deny this aspect of the sutra, saying that this method of distinguishing between the figurative and the literal cannot be something meant to be taken on face value.

GODE GNYIS KAS KYANG MDO 'DIR MDO SDE LA 'GAL SPONG GI DRI BA BYUNG LUGS DANG DE LA STON PAS LAN BTAB LUGS DANG DE LA BR TEN NAS DRANG NGES SU ZHAG LUGS RNAMS LA ZHIB TU MA BRTAGS PAR DRANG NGES KYI RNAM DBYE BYAS PA'I SKABS TZAM ZHIG LA RTZOD PAR SNANG NGO, ,

Neither of these two positions seems to have examined carefully how, in this sutra, the bodhisattva raises questions seeking to explain apparent inconsistencies in the sutras; or how the Teacher gives his answer; or how, based on this exchange, certain teachings are said to be figurative, and others literal. They simply seem to be different arguments about the period represented by the teachings which make the distinction between the figurative and the literal.

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[Folios 14a-18a in the ACIP digital edition (catalog number S5396), and pp. 34-44 in the ACIP Indian paper edition.]

GNYSIS PA LA GNYIS, SLOB DPON THOGS MED KYIS GTZO BOR DGONGS  
'GREL LA BR TEN TSUL DANG , DE LA BR TEN NAS DE KHO NA NYID  
GTAN LA PHAB PA'I TSUL LO, ,

Here begins the second major part in our discussion of the art of interpretation according to the *Commentary on the True Intent*; that is, an explanation of how this sutra is commented upon. We proceed in two steps: a description of how Master Asanga relies, primarily, on the *Commentary*; and a description of how he sets forth the meaning of thusness, based on this approach.

DANG PO NI, BSDU BA LAS, DON DAM PA MTSAN NYID LNGA DANG  
LDAN PA YANG DGONGS 'GREL LAS 'BYUNG BA BZHIN SHES PAR BYA'O,  
, ZHES DGONGS 'GREL GYI DON DAM PA'I LE'U RNAMS DRANGS SHING ,  
CHOS RNAMS KYI MTSAN NYID NI DGONGS 'GREL LAS 'BYUNG BA  
BZHIN BLTA BAR BYA'O, , ZHES MTSAN NYID GSUM STON PA'I MTSAN  
NYID KYI LE'U RNAMS DRANGS LA, CHOS RNAMS KYI NGO BO NYID  
MED PA'I MTSAN NYID NI DGONGS 'GREL LAS 'BYUNG BA BZHIN BLTA  
BAR BYA'O, , ZHES MDO SDE LA 'GAL SPONG GI DRIS LAN DANG DRANG  
NGES LA SOGS PA RNAMS STON PA'I NGO BO NYID MED PA'I LE'U  
RNAMS DRANGS SO, , GNYIS PA LA GNYIS, SLOB DPON THOGS MED KYIS  
GTZO BOR DGONGS 'GREL LA BR TEN TSUL DANG , DE LA BR TEN NAS DE  
KHO NA NYID GTAN LA PHAB PA'I TSUL LO, ,

Here is the first. In the *Compendium*, Master Asanga cites the chapters on the ultimate from the *Commentary on the True Intent*, saying—

You should understand the ultimate as having five characteristics, as described in the *Commentary on the True Intent*.

He also cites the chapters that treat the three attributes, in the words:

You should view the attributes of all existing things as these are described in the *Commentary on the True Intent*.

He further cites the chapters on how things lack any nature of their very own, the ones that relate topics like the question and the answer about apparent inconsistencies in the sutras, and the distinction between teachings that are figurative and those that are literal, like this:

You should view, for every existing thing, the characteristic of lacking any nature of its own as described in the *Commentary on the True Intent*.

DE BZHIN DU RNAM SHES TSOGS BRGYAD DANG MTHAR THUG RIGS  
NGES PA YANG DGONGS 'GREL NAS GSUNGS PA RNAMS DRANGS SO, ,

Master Asanga further refers to the idea of the group of eight different kinds of consciousness, and the idea that—ultimately—there are three fixed tracks, both as they are spoken in the *Commentary on the True Intent*.

BYANG SA'I DE KHO NA'I LE'U DANG DE'I RNAM PAR GTAN LA DBAB PA  
DANG THEG BSDUS LAS KYANG DGONGS 'GREL LAS GZHAN DBANG  
NGO BO DANG KHYAD PAR DU BTAGS PA'I KUN BRTAGS KYIS STONG PA  
YONGS GRUB TU GSUNGS PA NYID BSHAD PA'I RNAMS GRANGS MANG  
POS GTAN LA 'BEBS PAR MDZAD DO, ,

In others of his works—in the "Chapter on Thusness" from the *Levels of the Bodhisattvas*, in the treatise upon it, and in the *Compendium* as well—he makes his presentation using a great number of explanations which come from the *Commentary on the True Intent*: explanations which show how Lord Buddha stated that totality consists of the absence of constructs relating to the basic object and to its details, with regard to dependent things.

MDO SDE RGYAN DANG DBUS MTHA' LA SOGS PAR DE KHO NA'I DON  
BSHAD PA DANG DE DAG GI 'GREL PA RNAMS SU BSTAN PA'I GNAD  
RNAMS KYANG MDO SDE 'DI'I DON DANG SHIN TU MTHUN PAS LUGS

'DI LA MDO SDE 'DI'I DON GTAN LA 'BEBS PA NI RTZA BAR SNANG NGO ,  
,

Consider too the presentations of thusness found in the *Jewel of the Sutras*, in *Distinguishing the Middle from the Extremes*, and the various crucial points found in the commentaries upon these texts. They also are in very close agreement with the explanations found in our sutra, and so we can say that it appears that setting forth the meaning of this sutra forms the very foundation of this [Mind-Only] system.

GNYIS PA LA GSUM, MTHA' GNYIS SPONG TSUL SPYIR BSTAN PA, SGRO  
'DOGS KYI MTHA' BYE BRAG TU DGAG PA, DES GSUNG RAB KYI DRANG  
NGES 'BYED PA'I TSUL LO, ,

Here secondly is our description of how Master Asanga sets forth the meaning of thusness, based on this approach of relying primarily upon the *Commentary on the True Intent*. Here there are three steps: a general presentation of how one avoids the two extremes; a more detailed refutation of the extreme of concocting things; and how here the distinction between the literal and figurative teachings of Lord Buddha is drawn.

DANG PO LA GSUM, BYANG SA NAS BSHAD PA'I TSUL DANG , BSDU BA  
NAS BSHAD PA'I TSUL DANG , DE DAG LAS GZHAN PA'I GZHUNG NAS  
BSHAD TSUL LO, , DANG PO LA GNYIS, SGRO SKUR DU LTA BA'I TSUL  
DANG , DE GNYIS 'GOG PA'I TSUL LO, ,

The first of these has three further sections: the way in which the *Levels of the Bodhisattva* explains the point; the way in which the *Compendium* explains the point; and how other texts explain it. The first of these has two parts of its own: how a person who is concocting or discounting things views things, and how we refute them.

DANG PO NI, BYANG SA LAS, JI LTAR YOD CE NA YOD PA MA YIN PA LA  
SGRO BTAGS PA'I LEGS PAR MA ZIN PA SPANGS PA DANG YANG DAG PA  
LA SKUR PA BTAB PA'I LEGS PAR MA ZIN PA SPANGS PA YOD DO, ZHES  
SGRO SKUR SPANGS PA'I TSUL GYIS YOD DO ZHES GSUNGS PA'I SGRO  
'DOGS DANG SKUR 'DEBS NI JI LTA BU ZHIG YIN ZHE NA,

Here is the first of these two parts. One may begin with the following question:

The *Levels of the Bodhisattva* makes the following statement:

How then do things exist? They exist in a certain way—in which they are free of the object of a mistaken tendency to concoct things, a tendency directed at something which doesn't in reality exist; and in which they are free of the object of a mistaken tendency to discount things, a tendency directed at things which are in reality pure.

Can you explain what "concocting things" and "discounting things" mean in this description that things exist in a way free of concocting and discounting?

DE GNYIS NI BYANG SA LAS, GZUGS LA SOGS PA'I CHOS RNAMS DANG  
GZUGS LA SOGS PA'I DNGOS PO LA 'DOGS PA'I TSIG GI NGO BO NYID KYI  
RANG GI MTSAN NYID YOD PA MA YIN PA LA SGRO BTAGS NAS MNGON  
PAR ZHEN PA GANG YIN PA DANG , ZHES PA 'DIS SGRO 'DOGS TSUL  
GSUNGS LA,

These two are explained in the *Levels of the Bodhisattva* as follows.

The way in which concocting things works was spoken to be like this: it is that belief in which you concoct something about the very nature of the words that are used to make constructions concerning physical matter and all other existing objects, and concerning physical matter and all other functioning things; about words that are, in fact, things which do not exist by definition.

BTAGS PA'I TSIG GI MTSAN MA'I GZHI BTAGS PA'I TSIG GI MTSAN MA'I  
RTEN DU GYUR PA, BRJOD DU MED PA'I BDAG NYID KYIS DON DAM PAR  
YOD PA YANG DAG PA'I DNGOS PO LA THAMS CAD KYI THAMS CAD DU  
MED DO ZHES SKUR BA 'DEBS SHING CHUD GZON PAR BYED PA GANG  
YIN PA 'DI GNYIS NI CHOS 'DUL BA 'DI LAS RAB TU NYAMS PA YIN PAR  
RIG PAR BYA'O, , ZHES PA SNGA MAS NI SKUR PA 'DEBS TSUL BSTAN LA  
CHUD GZON ZHES PA MAN CHAD KYIS NI THEG PA CHEN PO'I CHOS  
ZAB MO LAS NYAMS PAR BSTAN NO, ,

Discounting things is like this; it is saying that the following do not, all in all, exist:

that which is the foundation, with the typical features,  
of the words used to make constructs—that which  
provides the basis, with the characteristics, of the  
words used to make constructs;  
that which exists ultimately, through an identity  
beyond all expression; and

that which is a pure, functioning thing.

They are, in short, things that waste one's opportunity; you should understand that these two will cause you to fall from this spiritual way of discipline.

The beginning part of this second section constitutes a description of what it is to discount something; and the part including the words "waste one's opportunity" on down is describing how a person would then fall from the profound teaching of the greater way.

GZUGS ZHES PA NAS DNGOS PO LA ZHES PA'I BAR GYIS KUN BRTAGS  
'DOGS PA'I GZHI BSTAN TE, DE LA 'DOGS PA'I TSIG GI NGO BO NYID CES  
PA NI TSIG GIS BTAGS PA'I NGO BO NYID LA BYA'I, 'DOGS BYED KYI TSIG  
LA MI BYA STE BSDU BA LA SOGS PA NAS GSAL BAR BSHAD DO, , BYANG  
SA'I SKABS GZHAN DU BYUNG BA RNAMS KYANG DE LTAR SHES PAR  
BYA'O, ,

The part that talks about "physical matter," continuing down to "functional things," is describing the object towards which a construct is directed. The part about "the very nature of the words that are used to make constructions" should be understood as referring to the nature [or attribute] of constructs, rather than to the words used in applying the constructs themselves; this point is made quite clear in works like the *Compendium*. You should keep in mind that—when this phrasing is used elsewhere in the *Compendium* as well—it should be read this same way.

TSIG GIS BTAGS PA'I NGO BO DE NYID RANG GI MTSAN NYID KYIS YOD  
PA MIN PA LA DE'I RANG GI MTSAN NYID YOD DO ZHES ZHEN PA NI  
SGRO 'DOGS SO, ,

The act of concocting things then consists of a believing that this nature

constructed through the use of words--something which in fact does not exist by definition--does exist by definition.

BTAGS PA'I TSIG GI MTSAN MA'I GZHI NI BTAGS PA'I TSIG GI MTSAN MA'I RTEN ZHES PAS BSHAD DE KUN BRTAGS KYI GDAGS GZHI'O, ,

The expression "that which is the foundation, with the typical features, of the words used to make constructs" is explained by the expression "that which provides the basis, with the typical features, of the words used to make constructs": the point is that we are talking about the object towards which the construct is directed.

DE NYID BRJOD DU MED PA'I TSUL KYI DON DAM PAR YOD PA LA THAMS CAD KYI THAMS CAD DU MED DO ZHES 'DZIN PA NI SKUR 'DEBS SO, ,

And the act of discounting things then consists of holding the idea that this thing--which "exists ultimately," in a way which is "beyond all expression"--"does not, all in all, exist."

DE LTAR BYAS NA KUN BRTAGS DON DAM PAR YOD DO, , ZHES PA NI SGRO 'DOGS DANG NGO BO NYID GZHAN GNYIS DON DAM PAR MED DO ZHES PA NI SKUR 'DEBS YIN TE, DANG PO KUN RDZOB DANG GZHAN GNYIS DON DAM PAR YOD PA'I PHYIR RO, ,

Given all this, concocting things is where you say, "Constructs exist ultimately"; and discounting things is something where you say, "The other two natures do not exist ultimately." This is because the first of the three actually only exists deceptively, whereas the other two exist ultimately.

DON DAM PAR YOD PA LA MED PAR LTA BSKUR 'DEBS SU BSHAD PA'I ZLAS DRANGS NA DON DAM PAR MED PA LA YOD PAR LTA BA SGRO 'DOGS SU BSHAD DGOS LA SKABS 'DIR KUN BRTAGS RANG GI MTSAN NYID KYIS YOD PAR 'DZIN PA LA SGRO 'DOGS SU GSUNGS KYIS DE DON DAM PAR YOD PAR 'DZIN PA TSIG GIS GSAL BAR MA BSTAN KYANG RANG GI MTSAN NYID KYIS YOD NA DON DAM PAR YOD PA GZHUNG GI DON YIN PAS KUN BRTAGS DON DAM PAR YOD PA SGRO 'DOGS SU 'GRO BA'I PHYOGS SO, ,

If we explain discounting things as being the view that something which in



actuality does exist ultimately doesn't exist at all, then it would seem that we'd have to explain concocting things as being the converse; that is, as the view that something which in actuality does not exist ultimately, does exist. The position stated at this point though is that concocting things consists of holding that constructs exist by definition--which means holding them to exist ultimately. So although it's not stated clearly in the actual wording, the point of the text here is that--if something exists by definition--then it exists ultimately. Holding that constructs exist ultimately then, according to this view, constitutes the act of concocting things.

DGONGS 'GREL LAS, KUN BRTAGS PA'I MTSAN NYID KYI GNAS 'DU BYED  
KYI MTSAN MA NGO BO DANG KHYAD PAR DU 'DOGS PA'I GZHI GZHAN  
DBANG LA GSUNGS PAS, GZHUNG 'DIS BTAGS PA'I TSIG GI MTSAN MA'I  
GZHI DON DAM PAR YOD PA LA MED CES GSUNGS PA'I DNGOS BSTAN  
GZHAN DBANG YIN MOD KYANG , DE DON DAM PAR MED NA YONGS  
GRUB KYANG DON DAM DU MED PAR 'GYUR BAS GNYIS KA LA BSHAD  
PA LA SKYON MED DE

Remember that the *Commentary on the True Intent* describes dependent things as "the object of the attribute of constructs; that which exhibits the typical features of a factor; and the object for applying constructs about the basic nature and the other features of a thing." We would have to admit, therefore, that when this text mentions holding that the "foundation, with the typical features, of the words used to make constructs" (something which in truth exists ultimately) doesn't exist, then what it is referring to explicitly is dependent things. There's no problem though if we say that the text is in effect speaking both of dependent things and totality, since—if dependent things were something that didn't exist ultimately—then totality would have to be something that didn't exist ultimately either.

BYANG SA LAS, GZUGS LA SOGS PA'I CHOS RNAMS KYI DNGOS PO  
TZAM LA SKUR PA 'DEBS PA LA NI DE KHO NA YANG MED LA 'DOGS PA  
YANG MED DE DE GNYIS KA YANG MI RIGS SO, , ZHES GSUNGS PA'I  
PHYIR TE DNGOS PO GZHAN DBANG LA SKUR PA 'DEBS TSUL NI THA  
SNYAD DU MED DO ZHES PA'AM SPYIR MED DO ZHES PA MIN GYI  
SNGAR GONG DU DON DAM PAR YOD PA LA MED CES PA SKUR 'DEBS SU  
GSUNGS PA LTAR RO, ,

This idea is supported by the *Levels of the Bodhisattva*, where it says:

If you discount objects like physical matter and other such objects that are functional things in themselves, you are still relegating thusness as well to the realm of non-existence, and it too would be something that didn't exist at all. And both these views would be equally wrong.

Thus we can say that the way in which a person discounts functional things, dependent things, is not where they say "They don't exist in a normal way" or "They don't exist at all," but rather where they say, as described above, that something which does in fact exist ultimately does not.

GNYIS PA NI, GAL TE SGRO SKUR BYED TSUL DE LTAR YIN NA DE GNYIS SPONG TSUL JI LTAR YIN SNYAM NA, DE LA SGRO 'DOGS KYI MTHA' NI CHOS GANG LA YANG DE'I NGO BO DANG KHYAD PAR DU BTAGS PA DES DE DON DAM PAR STONG PAR BSTAN PAS 'GOG STE ZHIB TU 'CHAD PAR 'GYUR RO, ,

Here is the second point, on how we refute the views in which a person either concocts things or discounts things. One may begin with the following question:

If that's what it means to either concoct things or to discount things, how then do we avoid falling into these views?

The extreme of concocting things is prevented by demonstrating how any object you choose to take at all is devoid of having a construct about it (either one about its basic nature or one about its various features) that could exist ultimately. We will cover this in greater detail later on.

SKUR 'DEBS NI BYANG SA LAS, DE MA THAG TU DRANGS PA'I LUNG DE DANG DE'I RJES THOGS SU 'DI LTA STE DPER NA GZUGS LA SOGS PA'I PHUNG PO RNAMS YOD NA GANG ZAG GDAGS SU RUNG GI MED DU ZIN NA NI DNGOS PO MED PA LA GANG ZAG GDAGS SU MED DO, , DE BZHIN DU GZUGS LA SOGS PA'I CHOS RNAMS KYI DNGOS PO TZAM YOD NA GZUGS LA SOGS PA'I CHOS 'DOGS PA'I TSIG NYE BAR GDAGS SU RUNG GI, MED DU ZIN NA DNGOS PO MED PA LA GDAGS PA'I TSIG GIS NYE BAR 'DOGS PA MED DO, , DE LA 'DOGS PA'I GZHI MED DU ZIN NA NI GZHI MED PAR 'GYUR BAS 'DOGS PA YANG MED PAR 'GYUR RO ZHES GSUNGS PAS BKAG GO,

Preventing the view in which you discount things is accomplished through the following words of the *Levels of the Bodhisattva*:

The citation given just after that, and the one immediately subsequent, make the following point. If for example the various heaps of physical matter and the rest do exist, then it is appropriate for us to apply the construct of person to them. If however you believed that they did not exist, then we could never apply the construct of person to them, since one could hardly speak this way of something that was not a thing.

By the same token, whenever the objects of physical matter and the like—functional things in themselves—do exist, then it is appropriate for us to apply the labels of "physical matter" and such to them. If however one believed that they did not exist, then we could never apply a construct to them with some constructing kinds of words; they would be something was not a thing. If one thus held that there existed no basis to apply a construct to, then—since there were no basis for construction—there would be no constructs either.

DE LA 'DIR SKUR 'DEBS 'GOG PA'I PHYOGS SNGA KHAS LEN MKHAN NI  
GZHAN SDER 'ONG DON MED LA RANG SDE YANG NYAN THOS SDE PA  
LA MING DANG BRDAS THA SNYAD 'DOGS PA'I GZHI'I GZUGS SOGS KYI  
DNGOS PO RANG GI MTSAN NYID KYIS MED CES KHAS LEN PA YANG  
MED DO, ,

Who is the opponent in this case; who is it that would even accept the idea of discounting things that we are disproving here? There's no reason why it would be some non-Buddhist school, nor would it be one of the listener groups, since none of them would ever assert that the functional things of physical matter and the rest that provide the foundation for applying expressions--both in names and terms--did not exist by definition.

DES NA BSDU BA LAS BSHAD PA LTAR THEG PA CHEN PO'I GRUB MTHA'  
SMRA BA YIN LA DE YANG CHOS RNAMS RANG GI MTSAN NYID KYIS  
MA GRUB CES SMRA BA'I NGO BO NYID MED PAR SMRA BA RNAMS SO, ,

Therefore they are, as explained in the *Compendium*, a school that professes the tenets of the greater way; and are moreover the ones who assert that nothing that

exists exists by definition. In short, we are talking about the "school that says nothing has any nature"; [that is, the Middle-Way School.]

DE DAG GIS NI GZHAN DBANG LA SOGS PA'I CHOS RNAMS SPYIR MI  
SRID PA DANG THA SNYAD DU MED CES 'DOD PA GTAN MIN PAS DON  
DAM PAR MA GRUB CES SMRA'O, ,

This school, by the way, in no way believes that the objects represented by dependent things and the like cannot exist, or that they do not exist in a nominal way. What they do say is that none of these things exists in an ultimate way.

DES NA DNGOS PO TZAM MED NA ZHES 'GOG PA NI SNGAR BSHAD PA  
LTAR DON DAM PAR YOD PA'I YANG DAG GI DNGOS PO MI SRID CES  
'GOG PA YIN TE, 'DI'I LUGS KYIS KUN BRTAGS LA RANG GI MTSAN NYID  
KYIS MA GRUB PA DANG DON DAM PAR MED NA MED MI DGOS KYANG  
, NGO BO NYID GZHAN GNYIS DON DAM PAR RAM RANG GI MTSAN  
NYID KYIS MA GRUB NA MED PA YIN NO, ,

Therefore the denial contained in the words "if functional things in themselves did not exist" is, as explained before, a denial of the idea that pure functional things, which do exist ultimately, could never exist. And this is true because, in this system, it is not the case that--just because they do not exist by definition and do not exist ultimately--constructs cannot exist at all. It is though the case here that if any of the other two natures were something that did not exist ultimately, or something that did not exist by definition, then they could not exist at all.

GZHAN DBANG SEMS SEMS BYUNG RANG GI RGYU RKYEN LA BR TEN  
NAS SKYE BA DE RANG GI RANG MTSAN GYIS GRUB PA'I SKYE BA YIN  
NA DON DAM PA'I SKYE BAR 'GYUR LA, DE MIN NA BLOS SKYE BAR  
RLOMS NAS SKYE'O ZHES BTAGS PA TZAM DU ZAD KYI SEMS SEMS  
BYUNG GI DNGOS PO LA SKYE BA YOD PAR MI 'GYUR RO SNYAM DU  
LUGS 'DIS BSAMS SO, ,

The way this system thinks about it is as follows. Consider the growing of several dependent things: mind and mental functions, arising as they do from their particular causes and conditions. If their growth is thus something that exists by definition, then it is an ultimate kind of growth. If this were not the case, then their growth would merely be something constructed in the mind, something where you just made it up in your own thoughts and said "they grow." And in this case, the growth of the functional things represented by mind

and mental functions wouldn't be something that existed at all.

DES NA GZHAN DBANG GI SKYE 'GAG BLO 'KHRUL PAS SKYE 'GAG TU  
ZHEN PA TZAM GYI NGOR YIN PAS KUN RDZOB TU SKYE 'GAG YOD PAS  
SKUR 'DEBS SU MI 'GYUR RO ZHES PAS LAN MI THEBS TE,

Don't respond to us then by saying that--since the growing and stopping of dependent things is only something that exists to a mistaken state of mind which is imagining that things are growing and stopping--growing and stopping are things that exist, in a deceptive way; and that therefore there is no discounting of these things occurring here.

THAG PA LA SBRUL DU ZHEN PA'I 'KHRUL NGOR THAG PA SBRUL YIN  
LA SPYIR THAG PA SBRUL DU GRUB MA MYONG ZHES PA DANG 'DRA  
BAR GZHAN DBANG GI RGYU 'BRAS KYANG RGYU 'BRAS BDEN 'DZIN  
GYI 'KHRUL NGOR RGYU 'BRAS YIN GYI, GZHAN DBANG KHO RANG  
RGYU 'BRAS SU MA GRUB CES 'DOD NA NI DE 'DRA KHAS BLANGS  
KYANG DGE SDIG LAS BDE SDUG SKYE BA'I LAS 'BRAS GZHAG SA MED  
PAR SONG BAS SKUR 'DEBS SPONG MI NUS LA,

Suppose you said something like "A rope is a snake to a mistaken state of mind which is imagining the rope to be a snake, but generally speaking there's never been a rope that was a snake." This is exactly what you're saying here too: "The causes and effects involved in dependent things are causes and effects to a mistaken state of mind, to the state of mind in which you hold causes and effects to exist truly, but they are not causes and effects for dependent things as such." You may say this is what you believe, but it doesn't release you from the charge of discounting things; there is no way then you can set forth the laws of karma and its consequences: the fact that pleasure and pain, respectively, come from good and bad deeds.

DE 'DRA MIN PA'I RGYU 'BRAS 'DOD NA NI RANG GI MTSAN NYID KYIS  
GRUB PA'I RGYU 'BRAS YIN PAS DON DAM PAR YOD PA'I DON GRUB PA  
YIN NO SNYAM DU BSAMS NAS, GDAGS GZHI MED NA 'DOGS PA YANG  
MED PAS CHOS THAMS CAD BTAGS PA TZAM YIN PA DANG DE NYID DE  
KHO NA'I DON DU BYED PA GNYIS KA MI SRID PAS CHAD LTA'I GTZO  
BOR 'GYUR RO ZHES BSHAD DE,

And if you believe in the other kind of cause and effect, they think in this school, then it has to be cause and effect which exists by definition, and which is then

something which exists ultimately. They say therefore that--since if there's no constructing if there's nothing to apply the construct to--then neither of these two ideas could ever be true: that every existing object is simply a construct of the mind, and that this is the point behind the meaning of thusness. They would therefore explain these ideas as being the most dangerous of all versions of the viewpoint that everything must have stopped altogether.

BYANG SA LAS, DE BAS NA GANG ZAG KHA CIG SHES PAR DKA' BA'I  
MDO SDE THEG PA CHEN PO DANG LDAN PA ZAB MO STONG PA NYID  
DANG LDAN PA DGONGS PA'I DON BSTAN PA DAG THOS NAS BSHAD  
PA'I DON YANG DAG PA JI LTA BA BZHIN DU MA SHES NAS TSUL BZHIN  
MA YIN PAR RNAM PAR BRTAGS TE RIGS PA MA YIN PAS BSKYED PA'I  
RTOG PA TZAM GYIS 'DI THAMS CAD NI BTAGS PA TZAM DU ZAD DE, 'DI  
NI DE KHO NA YIN NO SU 'DI LTAR LTA BA DE NI YANG DAG PAR LTA  
BA YIN NO ZHES DE LTAR LTA ZHING DE SKAD SMRA'O, ,

As the *Levels of the Bodhisattvas* says,

As such there are certain people who, first of all, listened to these sutras—difficult to grasp as they are; sutras which are tied to the greater way, and which describe the true intent of that profound object, emptiness. But they failed to understand the points explained in these sutras properly, correctly. And then they made up something, they got some idea that was inspired by wrong reasoning, and said that all these things were nothing more than something constructed by the mind. Then they went on and explained this as the meaning of thusness. So the ones we are talking about are anyone who says that seeing things this way is the right way to see things; anyone who actually thinks this way, and anyone who teaches it this way.

DE DAG GI LTAR NA 'DOGS PA'I GZHI'I DNGOS PO TZAM YANG MED PAS  
'DOGS PA DE NYID KYANG THAMS CAD KYI THAMS CAD DU MED PAR  
'GYUR NA GDAGS PA TZAM GYI DE KHO NA LTA YOD PAR GA LA 'GYUR  
TE, DE BAS NA RNAM GRANGS DES NA DE DAG GIS NI DE KHO NA  
DANG BTAGS PA DE GNYIS KA LA YANG SKUR PA BTAB PAR 'GYUR TE,  
BTAGS PA DANG DE KHO NA LA SKUR BA BTAB PAS NA MED PAR LTA  
BA'I GTZO BO YIN PAR RIG PAR BYA'O ZHES GSUNGS SHING ,

According to them, not even the very foundation to which we apply our constructs—functional things in themselves—is something that exists. And constructing itself then would be something that didn't, all in all, exist either. How on earth then could suchness, in the form of everything being a construct, exist either? As such those who purport this idea are, according to their own beliefs, guilty of discounting both thusness and the idea of constructs. And you should understand that—since their viewpoint is one which discounts both the idea of concepts and thusness—it is the most dangerous of all those views that nothing exists.

DE LA DGONGS NAS GANG ZAG TU LTA BA NI BLA'I STONG NYID LA  
LOG PAR ZIN PA DE NI DE LTA MIN NO ZHES GSUNGS TE, SNGA MA NI  
SHES BYA LA RMONGS PA TZAM YIN GYI SHES BYA THAMS CAD LA  
SKUR PA MI 'DEBS SHING GZHI DES DMYAL BAR MI SKYE LA, GZHAN  
CHOS 'DOD PA YANG PHUNG BAR MI BYED BSLAB PA'I GZHI LA YANG  
G-YEL BAR MI 'GYUR LA, PHYI MA NI DE DAG LAS BZLOG PAR 'GYUR BAS  
SO ZHES BYANG SA LAS GSUNGS SO, ,

It's with this fact in mind that the *Levels of the Bodhisattvas* has said that:

It's been said that "believing in a self-existent person is no problem compared to having a wrong idea about emptiness." The point here is that the former is simply a lack of awareness about knowable things; it does not represent a view in which you discount every knowable object—it is not an act that would throw you to a birth in the hell realms. The other kind of view is not one which would destroy your spiritual aspirations; nor is it one which would cause you to stray from the foundation of the rules. The latter though functions in the exact opposite way.

DE LTAR BYAS NA GANG LA GANG MED PA DE NI DES STONG ZHING  
LHAG MA GANG YIN PA DE NI YOD PA YIN LA DE LTAR MTHONG BA NI  
STONG NYID LA PHYIN CI MA LOG PAR ZHUGS PA YIN TE,

As such, we can say that whatever a thing lacks, that thing is empty of; and whatever's left over is something that exists. And when you see things this way, it means that you are engaged in an unerring understanding of emptiness.

GZUGS LA SOGS PA'I DNGOS PO RNAMS DE DAG TU TSIG GIS BTAGS PA'I  
NGO BOS STONG PA NI TSIG SNGA MA'I DON YIN LA, LHAG MA YOD PA  
NI GDAGS GZHI'I DNGOS PO TZAM DANG 'DOGS PA TZAM YOD PAR  
BYANG SA LAS GSUNGS TE, GANG GIS STONG PA NI KUN BRTAGS DANG  
GANG STONG PA'I GZHI GZHAN DBANG DANG SNGA MAS PHYI MA  
STONG PA'I STONG PA YONGS GRUB YIN LA DE DAG GI YOD MED KYI  
DON NI SNGAR BSHAD PA LTAR RO, ,

The meaning of the first part of the statement just given, says the *Levels of the Bodhisattvas*, is that all functional things—physical matter and the rest—are devoid or empty of any essential nature of being constructed by words. "Whatever's left over is something that exists" refers to the existence of those functional things in themselves which act as the foundation to which constructs are applied, and the constructing itself. The thing which things are empty of is constructs; the basis or object which is empty is dependent things; and the fact that the latter is empty of the former is totality. Saying that these things either do or do not exist has the meaning described before.

DE LTAR SGRO 'DOGS KYI MTHA' SPANGS PAS NI YOD PA'I MTHA' DANG  
SKUR 'DEBS SPANGS PAS MED PA'I MTHA' SPANGS PAS GNYIS SU MED  
PAR RAB TU PHYE BA YANG YIN ZHING ,

When you are able to avoid this extreme view of concocting things, then you are able to avoid the extreme view of "thinking that things exist." When you are able to avoid the extreme view of discounting things, then you are able to avoid the extreme view of "thinking that things don't exist." And then you will have also delineated "indivisibility" [or emptiness].

'DI 'DRA BA'I STONG NYID NI DON DAM PA'I MTHAR THUG TU BSHAD  
DE, BYANG SA LAS DNGOS PO SNGA MA GANG YIN PA DANG DNGOS  
PO MED PA 'DI GNYIS KYI YOD PA DANG MED PA LAS RNAM PAR GROL  
BA'I CHOS KYI MTSAN NYID KYIS BSDUS PA'I DNGOS PO DE NI GNYIS SU  
MED PA YIN NO, , GNYIS SU MED PA GANG YIN PA DE NI DBU MA'I LAM  
MTHA' GNYIS SPANGS PA BLA NA MED PA ZHES BYA STE ZHES SO, ,

And it is just this kind of emptiness which is explained as being the final form of the ultimate: the *Levels of the Bodhisattva* says that—

"Indivisibility" is that object which is incorporated in the nature of phenomena which is free of the existence and lack of existence of



the two: of the object of the former thing [of concocting things] and of asserting that things don't exist [of discounting things]. And this kind of indivisibility is what we call the "matchless" object of the path of the middle way, the way which avoids both the extremes.

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[Folios 18a-21a in the ACIP digital edition (catalog number S5396), and pp. 44-51 in the ACIP Indian paper edition.]

GNYIS PA LA GNYIS, PHYOGS SNGA MA DGOD CING DE'I DON LA DRIS  
LAN BYA BA DANG , LAN BTAB PA'I PHYOGS DGAG PA'O, ,

Here next is how the *Compendium* explains the point of how to avoid the two extremes. We proceed in three steps: a presentation of the opponent position, some questions and answers concerning this position, and a refutation of these answers.

DANG PO NI, BSDU BA LAS, THEG PA CHEN PO PA LA LA RANG GIS NYES  
PAR BZUNG BAS 'DI SKAD CES KUN RDZOB TU NI THAMS CAD YOD LA  
DON DAM PAR NI THAMS CAD MED DO ZHES ZER RO, , ZHES GSUNGS  
TE, CHOS KUN DON DAM PAR NI MED LA THA SNYAD DU YOD PA'O  
ZHES SMRA BA'I DBU MA PA RNAMS KYIS CHOS RNAMS KYI YOD MED  
KYI KHYAD PAR PHYE BA BRJOD PA'O, ,

Here is the first. The *Compendium* includes a section that says:

Some followers of the greater way, intent on continuing to hold to their errors, make this claim:

In a deceptive way, it is true that all things exist.  
Ultimately though nothing exists.

These are the followers of the Middle Way, who speak of some distinction between different ways in which all things both do exist and don't exist, saying, "No single existing thing exists ultimately; and every one of them does exist nominally."

DE NAS DE LA 'DI SKAD CES TSE DANG LDAN PA DON DAM PA NI GANG  
YIN KUN RDZOB NI GANG YIN ZHES BRJOD PAR BYA'O, ,

And when they say this we reply to them with the following question:

Then we ask you, venerable sirs, what does it mean to be "ultimate"? And what does it mean to be "deceptive"?

DE SKAD DRIS PA NA GAL TE 'DI SKAD CES CHOS THAMS CAD KYI NGO BO NYID MED PA GANG YIN PA DE NI DON DAM PA YIN LA, NGO BO NYID MED PA'I CHOS DE DAG LA NGO BO NYID DU DMIGS PA GANG YIN PA DE NI KUN RDZOB YIN NO,,

And suppose they answer like this—

"Ultimate" refers to that thing which is the lack of a self-nature that every existing object exhibits. "Deceptive" refers to that thing which is the tendency to see all these objects—which in truth have no nature of their own—as having some nature of their own.

DE CI'I PHYIR ZHE NA, 'DI LTAR DE NI YOD PA MA YIN PA DAG LA KUN RDZOB TU BYED PA DANG 'DOGS PA DANG MNGON PAR BRJOD PA DANG THA SNYAD DU BYED PA'I PHYIR RO ZHES LAN 'DEBS PAR GYUR NA, ZHES PA NI BDEN GNYIS GANG YIN DRIS NAS DE'I LAN BTAB PA PHYOGS SNGAR MDZAD PA'O,,

And why is that? Because this tendency focuses on things that don't even exist and creates a deception, and makes up something, and declares something to be, and creates an expression.

This would describe how our opponents would answer if you asked them what the two truths were.

DE LA 'DIR DON DAM GANG YIN DRIS PA NI DON DAM BDEN PA'I MTSAN GZHI DRIS PA YIN GYI DON DAM PAR MED CES PA'I JI 'DRA ZHIG TU MED PAS DON DAM DU MED PA'I MED SA DRIS PA MIN TE, GZHAN DU NA CHOS RNAMS KYI NGO BO NYID MED PA DON DAM MO ZHES SMRA BAR MI RIGS TE, DBU MA PAS DON DAM DU 'DOD PA'I CHOS KYI

BDAG MED DU YOD PAS DON DAM DU YOD PAR MI 'JOG PA'I PHYIR RO, ,

Here the question that is posed--"What does 'ultimate' mean?"--is one in which we are asking for a typical example of ultimate truth. It is not though a question about the "ultimate" that we say doesn't exist when we say that nothing existing ultimately; not a question about how something isn't. If it were, then it would be a mistake to answer that "ultimate" referred to the fact that no existing thing has a self-nature; and this is because, when those of the Middle Way say that something exists "as the ultimate," meaning "as the lack of self-existence exhibited by all things," this is not at all what they mean when they talk about something that could exist ultimately.

KUN RDZOB GANG YIN DRIS PA YANG KUN RDZOB BDEN PA ZHES PA  
GANG GI NGOR BDEN PA 'JOG PA'I KUN RDZOB DRIS PA YIN GYI THA  
SNYAD DU YOD PA'I YOD SA'I THA SNYAD DE GANG YIN ZHES DRIS PA  
MIN TE, GZHAN DU NA NGO BO NYID MED PA LA NGO BO NYID DU  
'DZIN PA KUN RDZOB BO ZHES SMRA BAR MI RIGS TE, DE NI BDEN 'DZIN  
YIN PAS DE'I ZHEN YUL THA SNYAD DU YANG MED PAR DBU MA PAS  
'DOD PA'I PHYIR TE NGO BO NYID MED CES PA'I MED RGYU'I NGO BO NI  
BDEN PA'I NGO BO NYID LA BYA DGOS PA'I PHYIR RO, ,

The question about "What does it mean to be 'deceptive'?" is as well a question about the state of mind to which something can be established as what we call "deceptive truth"; it is not a question about the "nominal" we speak of when we say that things exist "nominally." If it were, then it would be incorrect to speak of the "deceptive" where you hold that things have some nature of their own when--in fact--they have no such nature. Remember, this is the tendency to hold things as being true: and those of the Middle Way would say that the thing it believes in doesn't even have any nominal existence. And this is because, when you speak of things "not having any self-nature," the self-nature that you say things don't have has to be referring to a kind of self-nature which is absent: to a self-nature that existed truly.

GNYIS PA LA GNYIS, GZHAN GYI GRUB MTHA' LA 'GAL BA BSTAN PA  
DANG, RANG GI GRUB MTHA' LA 'GAL BA SPANG BA'O, ,

Here secondly are some questions and answers concerning the position stated. We begin with a demonstration of inconsistencies in the other school's positions, and go on to a demonstration that our own positions are free of any inconsistency.

DANG PO NI, DE LA THOG MAR KUN RDZOB KYI NGOS 'DZIN 'GOG PA NI  
BSDU BA LAS, DE LA 'DI SKAD CES BRJOD PAR BYA STE NGO BO NYID DU  
DMIGS PA DE MNGON PAR BRJOD PA DANG KUN RDZOB KYI RGYU LAS  
BYUNG BA YIN PAR 'DOD DAM, 'ON TE MNGON PAR BRJOD PA DANG  
KUN RDZOB TZAM ZHIG YIN PAR 'DOD,

Here is the first. This next section starts with a refutation of how the other school has identified the idea of the "deceptive." On this point, the *Compendium* says:

And then we would say to them the following:

Consider this tendency to see things as having some nature of their own. Are you asserting that it is something which comes from certain causes which are a "declaration" and which are deceptive? Or are you asserting that it is something which is a declaration itself, or a deceptive object itself?

GAL TE MNGON PAR BRJOD PA DANG KUN RDZOB KYI RGYU LAS  
BYUNG BA YIN NA NI DES NA MNGON PAR BRJOD PA DANG KUN  
RDZOB KYI RGYU LAS BYUNG BA YIN PAS YOD PA MA YIN NO ZHES  
BYAR MI RUNG NGO , ,

If your answer is that that it is something which comes from certain cases which are a "declaration" and which are deceptive, then it would be wrong for you to state that "Because it is something which comes from certain causes which are a declaration and which are deceptive, it is not something which exists."

GAL TE MNGON PAR BRJOD PA DANG KUN RDZOB TZAM ZHIG YIN NA  
NI DES NA GZHI MED PAR MNGON PAR BRJOD PA DANG KUN RDZOB  
CES BYAR MI RUNG NGO ZHES GSUNGS SO , ,

And if your answer is that it is a declaration itself, a deceptive object itself, then since there would be nothing to call them we could never even speak of something being a "declaration" or "deceptive."

DE'I DON NI 'DI YIN TE DON DAM PAR NGO BO NYID MED PA LA NGO  
BO NYID YOD DO SNYAM DU 'DZIN PA'I KUN RDZOB DE NANG GI  
MNGON PAR BRJOD PAR YANG 'GYUR LA DE'I TSE RANG GI RIGS 'DRA  
SNGA MA'I RGYUS BSKYED PA YIN NAM, KUN RDZOB PA DANG MNGON  
PAR BRJOD PA'I RNAM RTOG GIS BTAGS PA TZAM ZHIG YIN,

Here is the meaning of the citation. Consider the deceptive which focuses on things which ultimately have no nature of their own and thinks to itself "they do have some nature of their own." It too becomes a declaration within you—and when it does, the question is whether it is something which has grown out of a similar, previous case; or whether it is something which is merely constructed by ideas which are deceptive and declarations.

DANG PO LTAR NA RGYUS BSKYED PAS YOD PA MIN ZHES PA MI RUNG  
ZHES PA NI DON DAM PAR YOD PA MIN ZHES PA YIN TE 'DIR DON DAM  
DU YOD MED RTZOD PA'I SKABS YIN PA'I PHYIR DANG , PHA ROL POS  
DON DAM DU MED PAR KHAS BLANGS KYI SPYIR MED CES MA SMRAS  
PA'I PHYIR RO, ,

Suppose you say that the first is the case. The part about "It would be wrong to state that, because it is something which comes from certain causes, it is not something which exists" means "it is not something which exists ultimately," since in the context here the argument is over whether or not things exist ultimately, and because the opponent has never said that, in general, nothing exists--but rather accepts the position that nothing exists ultimately.

GNYSIS PA LTAR NA RTOG PAS BTAGS PA TZAM DU MI RUNG STE, 'DOGS  
PA'I GZHI MED PA'I PHYIR TE KUN RDZOB DANG MNGON PAR BRJOD PA  
RTOG PAS BTAGS TZAM YIN NA GZHAN RNAMS KYANG DE TZAM DU  
'GYUR BA'I PHYIR RO, ,

Suppose you say that the second is the way it is; in this case then it would be wrong to say that things were just constructs of our projections. And this would be true because there would nothing to which they could refer: if the deceptive and declaration were merely constructs of our projections, then the rest would become that way as well.

DON DAM PA'I NGOS 'DZIN 'GOG PA NI DE NYID LAS, DE LA 'DI SKAD  
CES TSE DANG LDAN PA CI'I PHYIR NA GANG DMIGS PA DE MED PA YIN

ZHES KYANG BRJOD PAR BYA'O, , DE SKAD CES DRIS PA NA GAL TE DE  
'DI SKAD CES PHYIN CI LOG GI DNGOS PO YIN PA'I PHYIR RO ZHES LAN  
'DEBS PAR GYUR NA, DE LA 'DI SKAD CES BRJOD PAR BYA STE PHYIN CI  
LOG DE YOD PAR

'DOD DAM 'ON TE MED PAR 'DOD,

Here next is the refutation of how the other school has identified the idea of the  
"ultimate." On this, the same work states:

And then we say to them,

And why is it, venerable sirs, that what we see doesn't  
exist?

And suppose they answer like this—

Because it is something which is mistaken.

We would then continue on and ask them:

Are you asserting that this mistaken thing is  
something which exists, or is it something which does  
not exist?

GAL TE YOD NA NI DES NA CHOS THAMS CAD KYI NGO BO NYID MED  
PA NYID NI DON DAM PA'O ZHES BYAR MI RUNG NGO, , GAL TE MED  
NA NI DES NA PHYIN CI LOG GI DNGOS PO YIN PA'I PHYIR GANG DMIGS  
PA DE NGO BO NYID MED DO ZHES BYAR MI RUNG NGO, , ZHES GSUNGS  
SO, ,

If you say that it does exist, then it would be wrong  
for you to say that "the fact that no existing thing has  
any nature of its own is the ultimate." If you say that  
it does not exist, then it would be wrong for you to  
say that "because it is something which is mistaken,  
what it sees doesn't have any nature of its own."

DE'I DON NI CHOS 'DI DAG LA RANG GI MTSAN NYID KYIS GRUB PA'I  
RANG MTSAN DMIGS BZHIN DU DE MED CES JI LTAR RIGS TE, DE LA NI

DE LTAR DMIGS PA'I TSAD MAS GNOD PA'I PHYIR RO,,

The point being expressed here is the following:

How could it ever be correct to say—even as you observe examples of things which exist by definition—that they don't? This is disproved by our own valid perception that these same things exist in this very way.

GAL TE DE LTAR DMIGS PA'I BLOS MI GNOD DE BLO DE NYID 'KHRUL PA'I DNGOS PO YIN PA'I PHYIR RO,, ZHE NA,

And suppose you say that "our position is not disproved by a state of mind which sees things this way, for it is itself a mistaken thing."

'O NA 'KHRUL PA DE RANG GI MTSAN NYID KYIS YOD NA NI NGO BO NYID MED PA DON DAM DU MI RUNG LA, MED NA NI 'KHRUL PA'I PHYIR DMIGS KYANG MED DO,, ZHES PA DE MI 'THAD DO,,

Our answer then would be,

Well now, if this mistaken thing is itself something which exists by definition, then it would be wrong to say that the fact that nothing has its own nature is what the "ultimate" refers to. And if on the other hand it didn't exist, then it would be incorrect to say "Because it is mistaken, then what it sees doesn't exist."

'DIR YANG DON DAM DU YOD MED KYI BRTAG PA BYA DGOS MOD KYANG DON 'DRA ZHING BRTAG PA SNGA MA GO SLA BAS DE LTAR BSHAD DO,,

We should admittedly in this case too go through the exercise of examining whether we are talking about existing or not existing, or doing so ultimately; but because the meaning is the same and because the point is easily understood from the previous examination, the section is written this way.

DE LTAR NA 'DIR KUN BRTAGS DANG YONGS GRUB GNYIS DON DAM PAR MED CING THA SNYAD DU

YOD PA LA SKYON MA BSTAN PAR KUN RDZOB PA'I SHES PA DANG  
'KHRUL PA'I SHES PA DON DAM PAR YOD MED LA BRTAGS NAS SKYON  
BSTAN PA NI, GZHAN DBANG DON DAM PAR MED LA KUN RDZOB TU  
YOD PA BKAG PA YIN TE, 'DI NYID YONGS GRUB KYI CHOS CAN DANG  
KUN BRTAGS KYI 'DOGS PA PO DANG GDAGS GZHI YIN PAS MKHAS PA  
RNAMS GTZO BOR 'DI NYID DON DAM PAR YOD MED LA RTZOD PA YIN  
NO,,

Consider the fact that, in this particular citation, no statement is made criticizing the idea that the pair of constructs and totality are not things which exist ultimately, but do exist nominally. The criticism is rather made through examining the question of whether a deceptive state of mind, and a mistaken state of mind, exist ultimately or not. The point of this approach is to refute the idea that dependent things could be something which did not exist ultimately, but which did exist deceptively. These dependent things are the things that exhibit the quality of totality; they are the ones that apply the constructs; and they too are what the constructs are applied to. And so these are what real thinkers take, primarily, as their subject when they argue about whether things exist ultimately or not.

GZHAN YANG BSDU BA LAS, DE LA GZHAN GYI DBANG GI NGO BO  
NYID DANG YONGS SU GRUB PA LA KUN BRTAGS PA'I NGO BO NYID DU  
MNGON PAR ZHEN PA GANG YIN PA DE NI SGRO 'DOGS PA'I MTHA' YIN  
PAR RIG PAR BYA'O ZHES DANG ,

Moreover, the *Compendium* says:

You should understand that any tendency where you focus on the nature known as "dependent things" and the nature known as "totality" and imagine them to be the nature known as "constructs" constitutes the extreme view of concocting things.

SKUR PA 'DEBS PA'I MTHA' NI GZHAN GYI DBANG GI NGO BO NYID  
DANG YONGS SU GRUB PA'I NGO BO NYID YOD PA LA MED DO ZHES  
RANG GI MTSAN NYID LA SKUR PA 'DEBS PA GANG YIN PA STE DE LTAR  
MTHA' GNYIS RNAM PAR SPANGS PA'I TSUL GYIS DE KHO NA'I DON GYI  
TSUL KHONG DU CHUD PAR BYA'O,,



And the extreme view of discounting things consists of any tendency where you focus on the nature known as "dependent things" and the nature known as "totality"—things that actually do exist—and say that they don't; this is discounting all those things which exist by definition. And so it is that you must come to a grasp of the actual meaning of thusness: by means of avoiding these two extreme views.

ZHES NGO BO NYID THA MA GNYIS RANG GI MTSAN NYID KYIS YOD PA  
LA DER MA GRUB BO ZHES PA RANG MTSAN LA SKUR 'DEBS SU GSUNGS  
TE, BYANG SA DANG 'DI GNYIS SGRO SKUR GYI MTHA' DANG DE SPONG  
TSUL GCIG GO,

The point of this citation is that—when you focus on the first and final two of the three natures, on the two that exist by definition, and say that they do not exist this way—then you are discounting all the actual examples of things that exist by definition. This text and the *Levels of the Bodhisattva* are exactly the same on the question of what the extreme views of concocting things and discounting things consist of, and on how we go about avoiding them.

KUN BRTAGS MED PA YANG DON DAM DU YIN GI THA SNYAD DU MED  
PA MIN TE, BSDU BA LAS, MNGON PAR RTOG PA DE DAG MING GANG  
DANG MNGON PAR BRJOD PA GANG GIS RNAM PAR 'JOG PA DE'I NGO  
BO NYID YIN PAR BRJOD PAR BYA'AM 'ON TE DE'I NGO BO NYID MA YIN  
PAR BRJOD PAR BYA ZHE NA, SMRAS PA, THA SNYAD LAS NI DE'I NGO  
BO NYID YIN PAR BRJOD PAR BYA'O, , DON DAM PAR NI DE'I NGO BO  
NYID MA YIN PAR BRJOD PAR BYA'O, , ZHES DANG ,

When we say that constructs don't exist we're talking about constructs that exist ultimately, not those that exist nominally. As the *Compendium* says,

One may ask the following question:

Consider constructed ideas, whether they are put together with names or with verbalizations. Are you saying that they have some existing nature, or are you rather saying that they have no existing nature?

And we answer with the following:

What we are saying is that—from a nominal point of view—they do have an existing nature. And what we are saying is that—ultimately speaking—they have no existing nature.

DE LA MNGON PAR BRJOD PA LA YONGS SU GOMS PA'I MING LA BRTEN  
PA'I RNAM PAR SHES PA'I DMIGS PA KUN BRTAGS PA'I NGO BO NYID  
GANG YIN PA DE NI ZHES GSUNGS NAS 'DI LTAR DE NI BTAGS PA'I YOD  
PA YIN GYI DON DAM PAR YOD PA MA YIN PA'I PHYIR RO ZHES GSUNGS  
SO, ,

It also speaks of "that thing which is the nature that we call 'constructs': the object of that consciousness which relies on names coming from a state of habituation with the declarations"; and then goes on to say that "these do have a constructed existence, but are not things that exist ultimately."

DES NA BDAG GNYIS KYI KUN BRTAGS LTA BU SHES BYA LA MI SRID  
KYANG DE TZAM GYIS KUN BRTAGS THAMS CAD MI SRID PA MIN PAS  
RDZAS SU YOD PA DANG DON DAM PAR YOD PA DGAG LA BTAGS YOD  
DANG THA SNYAD DU YOD PAR GZHAG GO,

And so—despite the fact that the constructs represented by the two kinds of "self-nature" are something which is a total impossibility—it doesn't necessarily follow that all constructs are impossibilities. Therefore we can at one moment deny that things could exist substantially or that they could exist ultimately, and yet still posit that they do exist in a projected way, in a nominal way.

DE'I PHYIR DGONGS 'GREL GYI 'GREL CHEN KHA CIG LAS KUN BRTAGS  
BDEN PA GNYIS KAR MED LA GZUNG 'DZIN GNYIS KYI GZHAN DBANG  
GI RTEN CING 'BREL PAR 'BYUNG BA SGYU MA BYAS PA DANG 'DRA BAR  
KUN RDZOB TU YOD PA DANG , YONGS GRUB DON DAM PA YANG YIN  
LA NGO BO NYID MED PA'I TSUL DU YOD PA DON DAM PAR YOD PA YIN  
NO, , ZHES BSHAD PA NI MDO DE'I DGONGS PA MIN NO, ,

As such the following ideas, presented in a number of major commentaries to the *Commentary on the True Intent*, do not represent the true intent of this sutra:

the idea that constructs are something which exist with regard to  
neither of the two truths;

the idea that dependent things—whether represented by objects of the mind or by the states of mind which perceive these objects—are something that exists only in a deceptive way, given the fact that their dependent origination is something which has been compared to an illusion; and the idea that totality is something ultimate, but something ultimate in the sense of existing as a thing that has no self-nature.

THEG BSDUS SU DGONGS 'GREL DRANGS TE PHYI ROL MED PAR  
BSGRUBS NAS PHYI NANG GI GZUNG 'DZIN KUN BRTAGS SU BSHAD PA  
DANG 'GAL ZHING , BYANG SA DANG BSDU BA DANG YANG 'GAL LA  
DER RNAM NGES KYI LUNG YANG DRANGS PAS, KHA CIG DE THOGS  
MED KYIS MDZAD ZER BA NI MA BRTAGS PA CHEN PO'O, ,

These ideas contradict the presentation in the *Summary of the Greater Way* which quotes the *Commentary on the True Intent* to show that external objects don't exist, and then goes on to explain that the idea of outer and inner things—seeing things as objects and subjects—is a construct. They also contradict both the *Levels of the Bodhisattva* and the *Compendium*; moreover, the fact that they quote lines from *Gaining a True Understanding of Valid Perception* [written by Master Dharmakirti hundreds of years later] shows that the claim made by some that they were written by Master Asanga is a gross failure to check the facts.

BSDU BAR DGONGS 'GREL GYI GLENG GZHI'I LE'U MA GTOGS PA LE'U  
LHAG MA RNAMS PHAL MO CHE DRANGS SHING DKA' GNAS RNAMS  
LEGS PAR GTAN LA PHAB 'DUG PAS SLOB DPON 'DIS 'GREL BA ZUR DU  
MDZAD DGOS PAR YANG MI SNANG NGO , ,

Moreover, the great majority of the chapters in the *Commentary on the True Intent*—all except for the chapter on the circumstances of the teaching—are quoted directly in the *Compendium*, and difficult points in them resolved quite thoroughly. And so there wouldn't appear any great need for the Master to have composed another, separate commentary.

PHYSIS KYI KHA CIG KYANG NGO BO NYID DANG PO THA SNYAD DU  
YANG MED, BAR PA THA SNYAD DU YOD KYANG DON DAM PAR MED,  
THA MA DON DAM PAR YOD PA THOGS MED SKU MCHED KYI DGONGS  
PAR 'CHAD PA YANG LUGS 'DI LAS PHYI ROL TU GYUR PA YIN LA,

There have been others later on too who explained the true intent of the pair—of Master Asanga and his brother—in the following way:

The first of the three natures doesn't even exist nominally.

The middle one of the three natures exists nominally, but doesn't exist ultimately.

The last of the three natures exists ultimately.

People like this too have wandered out of this system.

KHYAD PAR DU GZHAN DBANG THA SNYAD DU YOD PA'I DON 'KHRUL PA'I BLOS DE LA SKYE 'GAG SOGS YOD PAR ZHEN PA TZAM YIN GYI, DNGOS PO LA SKYE 'GAG SOGS MED DO ZHES 'DOD PA NI, GZHAN DBANG LA SKUR 'DEBS KYI MTHAR THUG DE'I RGYU MTSAN GYIS NGO BO NYID GZHAN GNYIS LA YANG SKUR PA BTAB PAS MTSAN NYID GSUM GA LA SKUR 'DEBS CHAD LTA'I GTZO BOR SNGAR BYANG SA LAS BSHAD PA DE YIN ZHING , MDO SDE DGONGS 'GREL NGES DON YIN PAR 'DOD PA'I PHYOGS LA SPANG DU MED PA'I 'GAL BAR SHES PAR GYIS SHIG,

Consider especially the position that—when we speak of dependent things as existing nominally—what we mean is that a mistaken state of mind merely imagines that growing and stopping apply to them; and that qualities like growing and stopping don't even exist with functional things. This is the most extreme possible version of discounting dependent things, and for this reason it moreover constitutes discounting the other two natures as well. Being therefore a discounting of all three of the attributes, it is exactly the viewpoint which the *Levels of the Bodhisattva* mentioned above as being the primary form of the view that all things have stopped. You should finally understand that this is idea would be an inescapable contradiction for anyone who held the position that the *Commentary on the True Thought* was meant literally.

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[When the text of the *Essence of Eloquence* was taught by Geshe Tupten Rinchen, he took great pains to point out that it is not correct--as some Western scholars have stated--that Je Tsongkapa himself adhered to the tenets of the Mind-Only School. The following selection to show that he follows, of course, the beliefs of the Consequence group is taken the concluding pages of our root text [ACIP electronic text S5396, ff. 112a-112b].]

,DA NI 'DI DRI BAR BYA STE CI SHING RTA CHEN PO'I TSUL GNYIS KYIS  
GSUNG RAB KYI DRANG BA DANG NGES PA'I DON RNAM PAR PHYE BA  
DANG , DE DAG GI DGONGS PA MKHAS PA'I DBANG PO RNAMS KYIS SO  
SOR BKRAL BA'I SGO MANG DU SNANG NA KHYOD CAG DE GNYIS KYI  
DGONGS 'GREL MKHAN PO GANG GI RJES SU 'BRANGS NAS, NGES PA'I  
DON DU BZHAG PA GANG LA MTHAR THUG PA'I DON DU 'DOD PA  
BRJOD PAR GYIS SHIG CES 'DRI NA,

Now suppose you come and ask the following:

We have a question for you. You have shown us how the systems  
of the two great innovators make the distinction between those  
parts of the highest of all spoken words which are figurative, and  
those which are literal. And there are a great variety of ways in  
which the different kinds of all great thinkers have commented  
upon the true intent of these two. Tell us now—which of these  
master commentators do you follow; how is it that you yourself  
decide on what is literal, and what is it that you believe is the  
ultimate?

,DZAM GLING MKHAS PA'I RGYAN GYUR 'DI RNAMS KYI, ,LEGS BSHAD  
KUN LA SNYING NAS GUS MOD KYANG , ,KHOR 'DAS RTEN 'BYUNG MI  
SLU'I GTAN TSIGS KYIS, ,MTSAN 'DZIN DMIGS GTAD THAMS CAD 'JIG  
BYED PA,

We answer with the following lines:

I can't deny that I feel respect from the bottom of my  
heart  
For all the fine words ever taught by the jewels among this world's  
sages;  
The reasoning though of dependence, invariable, for the  
cycle and what's beyond  
Acts to destroy our tendency to see things to be by the  
features they have.

,ZLA BA LAS 'ONGS LEGS BSHAD 'OD DKAR GYIS, ,BLO MIG KUN TA'I  
TSAL RAB PHYE BA'I TSE, ,SANGS RGYAS BSKYANGS KYIS BSTAN PA'I  
LAM MTHONG NAS, ,KLU SGRUB LUGS BZANG GTZO BOR MI 'DZIN SU,

,ZHES KHO BO CAG NI DE SKAD DU SMRA'O, ,

And when this pure white light of the Moon,\* this excellent  
explanation,  
Has opened wide the night-blooming lotus, the eyes of the  
intellect,  
And we finally see that path set before us by Buddhapalita,  
Who then would fail to hold as their core Nagarjuna's  
excellent way?

[\*Translator's note: The "Moon" here (chandra in Sanskrit) is an allusion to Master Chandrakirti.]

DE LTAR SNGAR BSHAD PA'I TSUL GYIS GSUNG RAB KYI DRANG NGES  
PHYE NAS DE KHO NA NYID GTAN LA 'BEBE PA'I SHING RTA'I SROL  
GNYIS PO 'DI NI PHA ROL TU PHYIN PA'I THEG PA'I SKABS SU RGYAS  
MOD KYANG , GSANG SNGAGS KYI GZHUNG 'GREL BA'I PA'NDI TA DANG  
, GRUB THOB RNAMS KYIS KYANG DE GNYIS GANG RUNG CIG DANG  
MTHUN PAR DE KHO NA NYID KYI DON GTAN LA 'BEBE PA LAS GZHAN  
PA'I PHUNG GSUM MED PAS TSUL 'DI NI GSUNG RAB MDO SNGAGS  
MTHA' DAG GI DE KHO NA NYID GTAN LA 'BEBE PA'I LAM DU SHES PAR  
BYA'O, ,

And so--in the context of the way of the perfections--it is the systems of the two  
great innovators that have spread widely; systems by which, in the ways we  
have described above, the meaning of that highest of spoken words is divided  
into the literal and the figurative, to determine what thusness really is. But it is  
also the case that those wise men who have commented upon the great works of  
the way of the secret word, and the eminent practitioners of this way, have set  
forth the meaning of thusness in keeping with one or the other of these very two  
systems; there is no third system between the two. You should understand then  
that this method is the path for determining the meaning of thusness for each  
and every one of the works of the highest of speech, whether we are talking of  
the open or the secret teachings.

DON GYI GNAD CHE LONG TZAM DU MA ZHIG MTHONG YANG YID MI  
TSIM PAR SHING RTA CHEN PO RNAMS KYIS GSUNG RAB LTA BA'I MIG  
TU PHYIN PA'I RIGS PA'I GNAD PHRA RAGS RNAMS LA LEGS PAR 'DRIS  
PAR BYAS NAS, GSUNG RAB KYI RGYA CHE BA DANG ZAB PA DANG ZAB  
PA LAS KYANG CHES ZAB PA'I ZAB GNAS RNAMS GTAN LA 'BEBE PA LA

BRTZON PA CHU BO'I RGYUN LTAR RTZOM ZHING ,

And so imagine a person who tried to find the meaning of thusness without relying on a system taught by one of the great innovators of the two methods. They would be like a blind person without a guide for the blind, racing towards some very dangerous place.

JI TZAM SHES PA DE TZAM DU SGRUB PA SNYING POR BYAS TE RGYAL  
BA'I BSTAN PA RING DU GNAS PAR 'DOD PA'I RNAM DPYOD CAN  
RNAMS LA KHO BOS LEGS PAR BSHAD PA'I SNYING PO 'DI GTAM DU  
BYAS SO, ,

And suppose that a person did want to rely on one of these systems, but had not spent a good deal of time acquainting themselves with their great books. Suppose, in particular, that they were relying only on a few short descriptions to determine the difference between those teachings of the Buddha which were figurative, and those which were literal--without having a proper understanding of the subtle, crucial points of reasoning involved. People like this would be taking refuge in words only; and even if they were to attempt to talk about thusness, it would be only words, without any essence.

DON GYI GNAD CHE LONG TZAM DU MA ZHIG MTHONG YANG YID MI  
TSIM PAR SHING RTA CHEN PO RNAMS KYIS GSUNG RAB LTA BA'I MIG  
TU PHYIN PA'I RIGS PA'I GNAD PHRA RAGS RNAMS LA LEGS PAR 'DRIS  
PAR BYAS NAS, GSUNG RAB KYI RGYA CHE BA DANG ZAB PA DANG ZAB  
PA LAS KYANG CHES ZAB PA'I ZAB GNAS RNAMS GTAN LA 'BEBS PA LA  
BRTZON PA CHU BO'I RGYUN LTAR RTZOM ZHING ,

Try to see how this is true, and never be satisfied with seeing even some great number of the more obvious crucial points on these questions. Make the effort to acquaint yourself well with both the gross and more subtle keys of reasoning that the two great innovators have given us as eyes to see into the Buddha's teaching. And then let your labors continue to flow, like some great stream, coming to an understanding of the profound points of the far-reaching traditions, and the profound traditions, and the more-profound-than-profound traditions, in the teachings of the Buddha.

JI TZAM SHES PA DE TZAM DU SGRUB PA SNYING POR BYAS TE RGYAL  
BA'I BSTAN PA RING DU GNAS PAR 'DOD PA'I RNAM DPYOD CAN  
RNAMS LA KHO BOS LEGS PAR BSHAD PA'I SNYING PO 'DI GTAM DU

BYAS SO, ,

Take then lastly whatever you have understood and make it the very heart of your own personal spiritual practice: it is for the likes of you, for those of intelligence who hope to see the teachings of the Victorious Ones remain long in our world, that I have set down into words this *Essence of Eloquence*.