



Class One Outline

- I. Introduction to the Dharma Essentials Series and to this Course
- II. Sanskrit and Tibetan Words for and Definitions of “Buddhist Logic”
- III. Importance of Logic in Buddhism
 - A. The key to understanding emptiness
 - B. Gyaltseb Je’s statement
 - C. Lord Buddha’s statement
- IV. Texts on Buddhist Logic
- V. Reality and Valid Perceptions
 - A. Levels of reality: evident, hidden, deeply hidden
 - B. Valid Perceptions
 1. Definition
 2. Two types of valid perception and what they perceive
 3. Master Dignaga’s famous opening statement
- VI. Meditation Assignment

Fifteen minutes a day on the things you know through direct perception, inferential reasoning, and authority and the differences between these three kinds of valid perceptions.

Dharma Essentials Course IV: The Proof of Future Lives
Reading One



THE ASIAN CLASSICS
INSTITUTE

The Asian Classics Institute
Dharma Essentials Course IV: The Proof of Future Lives
Level One of Buddhist Logic and Perception (*pramana*)

Reading One:

This selection is from *Light for the Path to Freedom*, written by Gyaltsab Dharma Rinchen (1364-1432) in explanation of the *Commentary on Valid Perception*.

Here is the third division, [on the purpose served by the reasoning where one proves the non-existence of something which does not appear]. A sutra states the following:

I or someone like myself can judge a person, but no normal person should judge another, for he will fall.

This statement itself expresses the purpose of the reasoning. What the Buddha is saying here is that:

Without being able to see the real condition, you should never say anything even close to "This person has such and such faults. This person hasn't the least good quality"—or "He or she has some good qualities, but nothing more than that."

We never know who might be a holy being, and every open and secret scripture there is says that the very finest way to end up in an unbearable birth within the realms of misery is to speak badly about a holy being. Every person who has any intelligence should therefore act with extreme caution in this regard; treat such matters as though you were walking on the edge of a great pit of glowing embers, innocently covered with powder of ash.

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The implication suggested by the sutra above, and by the great treatises which comment upon it, is that we must try to keep an attitude of wanting to help all living creatures, of wanting to assure their happiness. So try to remain in that pure vision where you see only pure good in other people. If you are not capable of this, then at least it would be nice if you could try to speak badly of others a little less than you do now.

English Introduction to Geshe Yeshe Wangchuk's *Jewel of the True Thought*

ENGLISH INTRODUCTION

Jewel of the True Thought is an important new treatise on the concept of valid perception (*pramana* or *tsad-ma*) in Buddhist philosophy. Its author is the venerable Geshe Yeshe Wangchuk, an eminent scholar from the Sera Mey college of Sera Tibetan Monastic University. The work has already taken its place in the commentarial tradition of Buddhist literature.

Subject of the Work

The study of valid perception is of vital importance in Buddhist philosophy, for it is this perception which allows us to determine the real nature of the world around us and thereby escape pain, whether it be in the form of a mild headache, or anxiety, or any undesirable object at all, on up to death itself.

This real nature of the world must be perceived not only with our direct physical and mental senses, but by indirect methods such as reasoning, which allows our minds to see important concepts such as the benefit of being moral. Therefore the study of perception is tied to the study of reasoning, or logic—and these form the core of the subject matter of the *Commentary on Valid Perception*, the classical text which this book explains.

The Commentarial Tradition

The *Commentary on Valid Perception* (*Pramanavarttika*, or *Tsad-ma n'am-'grel*) is a work in four chapters by the Indian Buddhist master, Dharmakirti. As with many early Buddhist sages, we know little of his life or even the dates that he lived; Western scholars place him at around 630 AD, although even this is uncertain. The "valid perception" in the title of his masterwork refers to another

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treatise, the *Compendium on Valid Perception (Pramanasamuccaya, or Tsad-ma kun-btus)*, and Master Dharmakirti's text is actually a defense of this piece.

The *Compendium* was itself composed by Master Dignaga, who is considered the father of the Buddhist logic traditions and is dated by Western scholars at around 440 AD, although again there is considerable uncertainty, and according to tradition he was a direct teacher of Master Ishvarasena, who is said to have been the direct teacher of Master Dharmakirti.

The philosopher Dignaga was for his part commenting upon the concepts of perception and logic presented in the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha, who lived 500 BC. And so the lineage goes from the Buddha, to Master Dignaga, to Master Dharmakirti, and then on to the early Indian explanations of Master Dharmakirti, including his own auto-commentary....

Levels of Reality

Deductive valid perception based on belief	That unerring, fresh perception which perceives a hidden object by using a good reason based on belief.	Those deeply hidden objects which can be established only by authoritative scripture.	Consider scriptures such as those which say, "Giving leads to abundance, and morality leads to happiness." They are unerring about what they teach, because they are scripture which has been confirmed with the three different tests.
Deductive valid perception based on convention	That unerring, fresh perception which perceives a hidden object by using a good reason based on convention.	Those objects which are decided on nothing more than whether we choose	Consider the "portrait of the rabbit." You can say it's the moon, because it's something you can think up.

What it Was that Master Dignaga Stated

From *Jewel of the True Thought of the Commentary on Correct Perception*, by Geshe Yeshe Wangchuk, of the Pomra College of Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery:

We have previously explained the first chapter of the *Commentary on Correct Perception*, which covered deductive perception, the means to achieve one's own

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goals. Here next we will explain the second chapter, which proves that the Buddha is a correct person.

This chapter begins from the second major point of the outline to the entire work; this is the explanation of what it is we seek to perceive: freedom and the state of all-knowing, and the path that will take us there. Here there are two divisions—the main subject, and certain secondary subjects.

There are three parts to the main subject; these are showing what it was that Master Dignaga stated, describing how the author of the *Commentary* explained what he stated, and demonstrating the true intent of each.

Here is the first. The following is the classical statement by Master Dignaga:

I bow down to the One who turned correct,
Who helps all beings, the Teacher,
The one who went to bliss,
And our Protector.

And now out of love
For those mistaken in their logic
I shall explain the right way
To establish correct perception.

As elucidated in the *Light on the Path to Freedom*, these lines present the offering of praise and the pledge to compose the work. . .

The Definition of Correct Perception

The following is a selection from the *Jewel of the True Thought*, by the great scholar Geshe Yeshe Wangchuk, in explanation of the *Commentary on Correct Perception* by Master Dharmakirti....

The identification of what it means to be "unerring" is found in two and a half lines of the root text:

**Correct perception is a state of mind unerring;
To be in a condition able to perform a function
Is what "unerring" means.**

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The thing that correct perception undertakes to perceive is the existence of and the means for a person to attain a birth in the higher realms, as well as definite good. The Able One is the one being who is unerring with regard to all of these things; and so, if you should wonder how correct perception is defined, we can state that "a fresh **state of mind which is unerring**" is the definition of correct perception.

And what is the meaning of "unerring"? Suppose you perceive something as being **able to perform the function** of cooking or burning something else. Your perception is "unerring" when this thing does actually exist in the **condition** you have perceived it to be.

Here secondly is a detail of the definition, which is indicated in six lines from the root text:

**It must also illuminate something not perceived.
Subsequent to perceiving the thing in its very essence,
You have a more general type of experience.
It's because the intent when they mention a perception
Is one that has not perceived a definitive object.
Because it discerns its own definitive object.**

What this is saying is that the requirement described above, that a perception be "unerring," is not by itself enough to complete the entire definition of correct perception. This is because the perception **must** be one which **illuminates something** that was **not perceived** previously; and so we must **also** mention at some point in the definition that the object is known "for the first time," or "freshly." As such, the standard definition for correct perception is "a fresh and unerring perception."

Someone might make the following objection. "Suppose we allow you to define correct perception as a fresh illumination of an object. Consider then a recollection in which you perceive the color blue. According to you, wouldn't this have to be a correct perception? Because isn't it a state of mind which realizes its object and is fresh? And it is just that, for it is a state of mind which is a fresh perception of the mental image of the color blue."

Yet there is no such problem. What happens is that the state of mind which grasps the color blue directly **perceives** that **very essence** of blueness which is unique to it. **Subsequent to** this perception **you have a more general experience**, where your mind grasps to a mental image of the color blue. This

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latter state of mind though does not have the ability to discern the object on its own power alone. If something is correct perception, it must be a fresh perception of a **definitive object** that it **has not perceived** before, or else must be directly dependent upon such a perception. Incidentally, you should understand the phrase "definitive object" here as referring to an object as it exists in its own essence.

Showing that the Buddha has the Qualities of Correct Perception

From *Jewel of the True Thought of the Commentary on Correct Perception*, by Geshe Yeshe Wangchuk, of the Pomra College of Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery:

Here secondly we show that the qualities of correct perception are as well possessed by the victorious Buddha. We proceed in two steps: bridging this explanation to the meaning of correct perception already presented, and explaining the meaning of the words "who turned." The first of the two is conveyed in the root text with the line,

**The one who has it is the Victorious One;
Perfectly correct itself.**

Consider the **Victorious One**, the able Buddha. He is **perfectly correct** towards each and every existing object, for He is **the one who has "it"**: that is, who has a fresh and unerring perception of all these objects, and who is that **itself**.

The main point here is to show that omniscience is a correct perception which sees directly, and on its own power, each and every existing object: the nature of all things, and the totality of all things. And the Buddha is as well a being who possesses this omniscience. Incidentally, this fact also disproves the belief that realized persons who are Buddhas do not possess the mental function of wisdom....

Our own textbooks, in the section on the study of the mind, define recollection as "A state of mind where you perceive what you have already perceived before." The textbooks of certain other monasteries say that the definition of recollection is "A state of mind which is not correct perception, and where you perceive what you have already perceived before." *Light on the Path to Freedom* says,

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No matter how much we look within ourselves and think it over, we cannot detect any case where omniscience could be anything other than correct perception, or where there could be any case of correct perception that were not a fresh perception.

If you consider this quotation carefully, you can see that it is stating that the second and following moments of omniscience are fresh perceptions towards their objects.

If the first moment of omniscience does not see the past, present, and future all at once, then there could be no wisdom which sees all these three times at once. If it does see these three, then it would have to see all objects which are going to occur in the future. As such there could be no object which the second and following moments perceived which had not already been perceived before, or which the first moment had not perceived. Therefore our own position is that the group of things which are discerned by the first moment of omniscience and the group of things which are discerned by the second moment of omniscience are completely identical.

One may then make the following objection:

If that's the case, then let's consider the second moment of omniscience. Isn't it then a state of mind which perceives something which it has already perceived before? Because isn't the only thing it perceives then exactly the same thing which has already been perceived by the first moment of omniscience?

Our answer is that it doesn't necessarily follow. Although it is true that the second moment of omniscience does perceive what it does in the way described, it does not engage in its object by force of the first moment of omniscience, but rather perceives its object on its own power.

Here secondly is our explanation of the meaning of the words "who turned." First we will describe the necessity for mentioning "who turned," and then after that discuss some objections to this description. The first point here is covered in the following three lines of the root text:

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**The phrase that goes "who turned"
Is spoken in the sense**

**Of the opposite of something
Which wasn't ever developed.**

**This as well is why it's right
That correctness depends on achieving.**

There are two reasons why Master Dignaga, in the verse of the offering of praise at the beginning of his work, the *Compendium on Correct Perception*, mentions the phrase "**who turned.**" The first purpose for these words is the kind that is meant to exclude something. Here they **are spoken in the sense of the opposite**: they are meant to indicate that a person who is totally correct could never be something that **didn't ever develop** from its proper cause.

The second purpose for these words is the kind that is meant to imply something. Here the point we are supposed to grasp is that one develops into a person of total **correctness** only by **depending** on reaching the final perfection of a gradual practice of all the various methods used for **achieving** this state....